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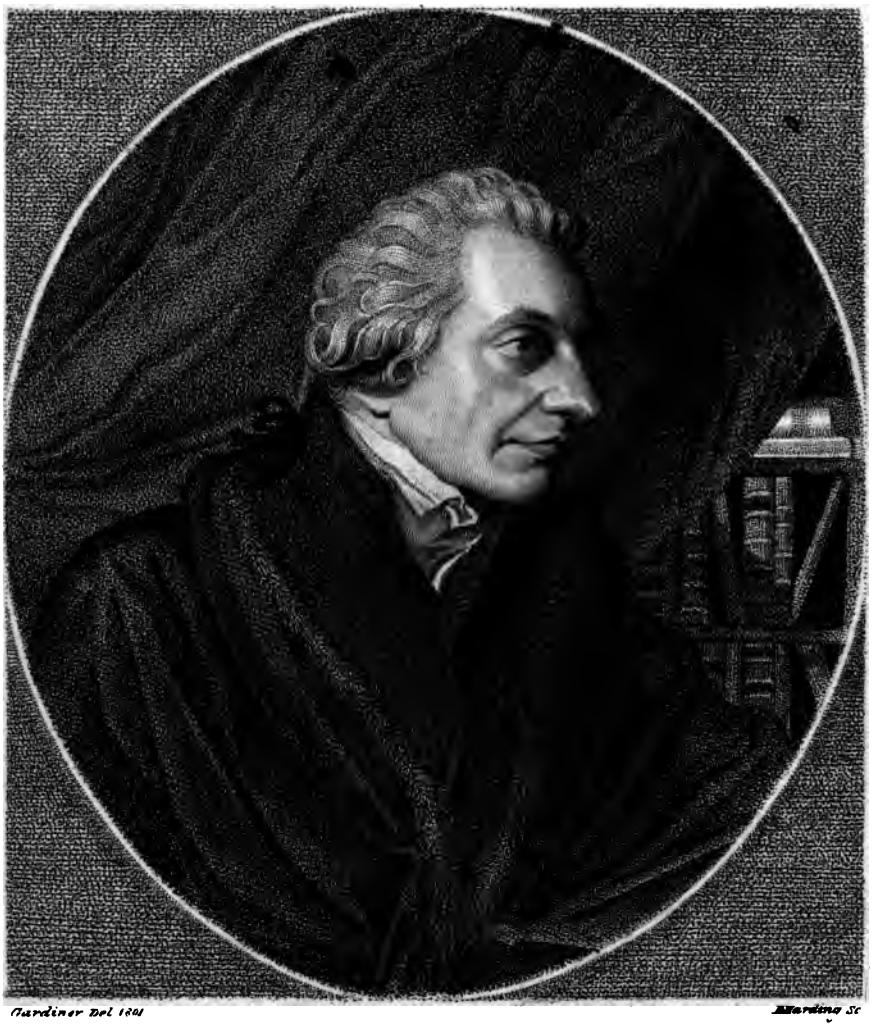

MICHAEL WODHULL, ESQ.

POEMS,

BY

L745

MICHAEL WODHULL, Esq.

A REVISED EDITION.

Multa dies et multa litura coercuit. HORACE.

Voce tamen noscar; vocem mihi fata relinquunt. OVID.

LONDON:

PRINTED BY NICHOLS AND SON,
RED LION PASSAGE, FLEET STREET.

1804.

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NEW YORK

ALL the following Poems were printed in 1772 and 1798: it would be tedious to enumerate the various changes, additions, and retrenchments which have since taken place: let it suffice to mention, that under much bodily weakness, they are not dictated by the spirit of a modish proselyte.

No Candidate for Ecclesiastical Dignities, the Author has invariably asserted the principle of occasional conformity to both the two "sound and "Apostolic Churches in this Island by Law esta-"blish'd;" pleading the Cause of Toleration he came forward a disinterested Advocate: his Politics are those of a British Whig, not run away with by National Prejudices; in deprecating a War which had for its object the restoration of the Bourbons, and auguring success to France against swarms of Confederates,

Confederates, he anticipated for a moment the voice of his Country; that voice, to his great sorrow, soon took a contrary direction. If he fail in obtaining either the smiles of the powerful, or the shouts of the multitude, there yet remains a consciousness that he is burning his incense on the Altars of Truth.

Thenford, Northamptonshire, near Banbury,
June 12, 1804.

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ODES.

L. Stern. del. Romæ. I. d. Faldoni inc.

ODE I.

TO

THE MUSES.

.....

Me vero primum dulces ante omnia Musæ,
Quarum sacra fero ingenti perculsus amore,
Accipiant. VIRGIL.

Μουσαων Ἑλικωνιαδων αρχωμεθ' αειδειν,
Αἵθ' Ἑλικωνος εχουσιν ορος μεγα τε, ζαθεον τε. HESIOD.

.....

1.

CELESTIAL Maids, my venturous Song inspire:
While, to your praise attun'd, I strike the votive lyre.

All-encircling ocean's wave,
From each exhaustless urn
Of a thousand rivers fraught
With plenteous currents, in return,
Demands the waters which it gave.
To you whose impulse animates the breast,
Still be the tributary Pæan brought,
The shrine with laurel drest;
Ye too the stormy passions can control,
And rule by Reason's aid the tumults of the soul.

II.

Your creative power was shewn,
What time Pirene's magic well
Excited blind Mæonides to tell
Of deeds by Gods and godlike Heroes wrought,
Those artless numbers given by you alone,
Utter'd the bard; unstudied and untaught;
(The books of Nature and of man explor'd,)
On Glory's eagle wings he soar'd.

III.

Nor Peneus' haunted stream your realms can bound,
Nor from Parnassus only beams your ray;
In every region are ye found,
And on Cimmerian darkness pour the day.
Hence from Bœotian plains
Resounded Pindar's strains,

To

To give this maxim weight;
" That, by no local laws confin'd,
" The genius of a noble mind
" Superior still, expands its force innate:
" All climes, and every soil, produce the good, the great."

IV.

Arcadian lawns no more your steps invite,
On Mænalon no more ye rove,
Nor midst Idalia's fabled grove,
Nor in Athenian porticos delight;
Nor by the banks which Mincius laves,
Where Liris rolls its gentle waves,
Nor in proud Rome's majestic structures dwell:
In sullen silence Tiber glides,
And views along his winding sides
In evil hour uprear'd, the monkish cell:
Black Superstition, bath'd in human gore,
With all her ghastly troop sits brooding on the shore.

V.

By Gothic arms driven from your lov'd retreat;
Ye seek in western climes a more auspicious seat;
Where Albion's chalky cliffs o'erhang the main,
From your aërial mansions ye descend,
Fame's rapid car attend,
And grace Astræa's train.

VI.

Firm like the pine-clad Alps' stupendous height,
If Homer rear'd an edifice divine;
As Arno's blooming vale attracts the sight,
Thro' matchless elegance if Virgil shine;
Here enraptur'd we behold
With native genius, a well-cultur'd mind,
In one great Bard combin'd,
Such, such was Milton's flight,
Above the beaten track he dar'd to rise,
He sung of wonders yet untold,
Left the low earth, and sought his kindred skies;
To aid his towering theme ye deign'd t' impart
The Grecian fire, the Roman art.

VII.

If Aristophanes with comic pen
Describ'd the vain pursuits of men;
Or Terence, on the Latian stage,
With tales of beauty's smiles
Triumphant o'er the miser's baffled wiles,
Won loud applauses from a polish'd age.
To the bold numbers of the tragic lore
If Sophocles could raise his buskin'd song;
Bid Pity drop the sympathizing tear,
Bid the bosom freeze with fear,
With unrelenting anger burn,
Or despair to frenzy turn,

And with heroic deeds of yore
Arouse the gazing throng;
Displaying thus with grateful praise
Warlike chiefs in ancient days;
How through the checquer'd paths of life they trod,
What made Ulysses great, or Hercules a god.

VIII.

Warm in the praises of our native earth,
Let Albion's sons exulting hail the day
Which gave immortal Shakespear birth;
A twofold wreath's unsullied bloom
Winds o'er his front, and scatters rich perfume;
Now on elfin pinions light,
Guided by the lunar ray,
To proud Titania's realm he speeds his flight,
Now with unaffected wit
Draws the rude clown, or mercenary cit.

IX.

Again his scenes the feeling heart expand,
And call forth ftern Affliction's band,
Long years of civil discord then relate,
How York and Lancaster's misguided rage
Distain'd chaste record's whiter page;
Or how intrepid Henry's lance,
Hurl'd at the crested pride of France,

E'en to its basis shook that haughty state,
His banners streaming through a vanquish'd land;
Or how (o strange reverse of Fate!)
Our blasted trophies shrunk beneath a * woman's hand.

x.

If Boreas rages o'er the field,
Mark how the pliant osiers yield;
Too feeble his assaults to brave,
Now lie they prostrate on the land,
Now dip their heads beneath the roaring wave:
While yon strong oak erect remains,
And unsubdued his empty threats disdains,
Firm rooted in the strand.

xi.

So Latium groan'd beneath imperial sway,
Oppression rul'd, and Freedom bled,
Chaunted each bard his venal lay,
And twin'd the wreath to deck a tyrant's head
Midst the contagion foul of times
When Nature shudder'd at enormous crimes,
A Juvenal was born,
Who soar'd above each pamper'd minion's hate,
Branded a canker'd age with public scorn,
Nor meanly stoop'd to sooth the great.

* The Maid of Orleans. See Shakespear's First Part of Henry the Sixth.

XII.

While in contempt neglected Science lies,
Audacious Vice all law disdains,
And while pedantic Dullness reigns,
In Truth's and Virtue's cause see Pope arise:
O'erweening Pride's determin'd foe,
He boldly aim'd the vengeful blow,
Nor brandish'd Satire's pointed shafts in vain:
Yet his harmonious strain
To future days
Transmits, with never-sullied praise,
The brave, the generous, and the wise.

XIII.

The Bard of * Syracuse with Doric reed
Once celebrated festive plains,
Beauteous nymphs, and constant swains,
And lov'd his goats, and tender sheep to feed;
In sweetest accents rolls along
The pure simplicity of song.
See at the noontide hour his shepherds laid
Beneath the cool sequester'd shade
Amid the fragrance of yon myrtle grove:
Securely browse their bleating flocks
Scatter'd o'er the pathless rocks
Where mantling moss surrounds the lucid rills,
Or o'er flowery meadows rove,
While Zephyrs whisper from the pine-topt hills.

* Theocritus.

XIV.

Like his our British Thomson's rural lay,
Thro' the Zodiac's changeful sphere,
Traces the revolving year,
And all its Seasons paints in bright array;
Now 'tis Nature's vernal morn,
Spontaneous flowers the smiling fields adorn;
Next Summer's torrid suns intensely blaze,
Sirius darts his piercing rays;
Then mellow Autumn yields the ripen'd blade;
At length old Winter comes in hoary weeds array'd.

XV.

High on the summit of yon sacred hill
With laurels thick begirt your temple stands;
There ye rove in wildest measures,
Attended by the silver-footed Pleasures,
Your tuneful voice th' obedient flute commands,
Or lyre responsive to the golden quill:
As in the vale beneath I humbly bend,
The wafted melodies descend;
In wonder lost I gaze around,
And catch with ecstacy the mimic sound.

XVI.

Hark the shouts of battle rise;
The clash of arms, the hissing shafts I hear,
The din of conquest, mingled cries,
Rage leads the van, and Havoc smites the rear:
The God of War with stern disdain
Surveys the crimson field,
He drives exulting o'er the slain,
Grasps his swift lance, and shakes his brazen shield;
The recreant squadrons, seiz'd with instant fear,
Fly from his flaming sword, and lightning of his spear.

XVII.

Whence the proud victor with unfeeling joy
Leads his gay pomp, we turn our eye,
Awhile forget the blast of Fame,
And own Compassion's juster claim;
Doleful scenes our thoughts employ,
To plains where stretch'd in dust those warriors lie,
Hovering vultures wing their way,
Growls the grim wolf, and waits his nightly prey.

XVIII.

No longer now with cares distrest
My wearied spirits sink to rest,
Beneath the covert of some friendly shade,
Where beeches skirt the shelter'd glade;

Where

Where stately elms support the curling vine,
Or climbs the flaunting jessamine,
Seated on the leafy spray
The feather'd songsters chaunt their quavering lay;
Sloping hills at distance seen,
Meadows cloath'd with waving green:
Here, sportive rivulets o'er the level ground
In wild meanders gently glide,
And there, with hoarse rebellowing sound,
The torrent foams adown the mountain's craggy side.

XIX.

From the tall brow of that romantic steep,
Beneath whose sedgy caverns Neptune lies
Circled with sea-born deities,
On the calm surface of the azure deep
I view the Nereids rise;
Down their smooth necks the floating ringlets spread,
The zoneless vest as loosely trails behind,
With unconscious grace they tread,
Then in the shelving grotto sit reclin'd:
O'er the light strings their volant fingers move
Accorded to the songs of love:
" How at Nature's infant birth,
" When from Confusion rose the teeming earth,
" From their parent ocean sprung
" Venus, goddess, fair and young:

" The

" The God of battles caught her wanton glance,
" With the eager flame opprest,
" Unbound his helmet, dropt his glittering lance,
" And in her Cyprian bowers the yielding fair caress'd."
As the sweet sisters tune the melting strain
They feel the lambent fire;
In their warm bosoms pants the fierce desire,
And thrills in every vein.

XX.

Hence as I roam along the desert heath,
And press with tardy feet the ground,
Solemnly tolls the midnight dirge of death;
I stop; and tremble at the sound:
Entering now that mouldering pile,
I traverse o'er each lonesome isle;
Scarce the faint tapers shed their drowsy light;
E'en full-orb'd Cynthia feebly gleams,
And in the dark abyss of night
Impending clouds refract her issuing beams.
As here unheard, unpitied, and alone,
To the deaf walls I vent my plaintive moan;
At length the boding screech-owl's dismal cries
Answer my frequent sighs,
And from their yawning tombs the pallid spectres rise.

XXI.

Since Fancy first began to dawn,
Oft have I sought the silent grove,
Oft trac'd the mazes of the lawn,
If in those haunts perchance ye deign'd to rove;
Oft at your shrine my vows address'd,
And pour'd these dictates of a feeling breast;
" Hear me," I cry'd, " and elevate my heart
" With your poetic fire;
" Teach me to chuse the nobler part,
" Pleas'd in your solitary seats to live;
" To strike with energy the lyre,
" And taste those pleasures ye alone can give.
" Far from the glare of courts, where haggard Strife
" Mixes the bitter cup of woe,
" To where the purer joys of life
" In an even channel flow,
" Conduct my steps; I follow, and obey,
" Since artless Nature points the way."

[1760.]

C. Stern del. Romæ. I. A. Faldoni inc.

ODE II.

TO

Miss SARAH FOWLER.

.....

Toutesfois vous demeurant en ce lieu, mes tenebreuses et tristes parolles n'en pourroient chasser les Graces, desquels vous me semblez estre l'unique simulachre, et moins les Muses qui vous recognoissent pour leur Minerve; TYARD.

.....

I.

When first Aurora's gorgeous car
Springs from Night's dreary vault releas'd,

And

And Beauty's consecrated star
Retires behind the blushing east;
Can Titan's orient beams dispense
A more propitious influence
To animate th' exulting earth,
Than sheds bright Fancy o'er the mind,
When, from Care's grosser dregs refin'd,
It gives the fruits of Genius birth?

II.

Not in the solitary gloom,
By the dim taper's sickly ray,
Sunk in the rust of Greece and Rome,
Does Genius point the doubtful way,
While in abstracted thought the Sage
Revolves the stern Socratic page;
Or by the tedious rules of art
In melancholy search pursues,
Yet finds the gay, the bashful Muse
Unseen and unattain'd depart.

III.

Where Poesy erects her seat
The myrtle's fragrant branches twine,
Beneath the Pleasures' nimble feet
Upstarts the new-born columbine.
Methinks I see the jocund band
Of Loves and Graces hand in hand

Their artless symphony inspire;
The Muses catch the dulcet sound,
They waft the sportive echos round,
And wake the sympathetic lyre;

IV.

The rose's aromatic bloom
Adorns their wild fantastic grove,
And o'er the violet's perfume
Angelic forms delighted rove;
Fair Sappho in Elysian bowers
Beguiles the gently-stealing hours,
And sooths abhorr'd Despair to rest:
From her we catch the lambent fire,
The transports of refin'd desire
Implanted in a feeling breast.

V.

Carelessly tripping o'er the green
The sprightly Deshoulieres appears,
With winning air and brow serene
Unclouded by the frown of years:
Around the Nymph, in graceful state,
A thousand smiling Cupids wait,
And each performs his destin'd part;
Some give the cheeks a livelier glow,
Some tune the lyre, some twang the bow
To pierce the most obdurate heart.

VI.

The plaintive Rowe, whose warbling breath
Dispers'd the melancholy gloom
Which at her dear Alexis' death
O'erhung the sickening vales of Frome,
To the soft Cyprian lute recites
The fears, the hopes, the fond delights,
The tender blandishments of Love,
Their mutual happiness completing,
Where Innocence and Pleasure meeting
Have fix'd them in the realms above;

VII.

Beside them Cytherea stands
In Virtue's snowy garb array'd,
And re-unites their social hands
Sever'd by Death's remorseless blade:
The Loves with elegiac verse
Meanwhile adorn the sable hearse
In which their mortal ashes lie,
And, in due chaplet, Phœbus weaves
The laurel's never-fading leaves,
The symbols of eternity.

VIII.

Yet not from these romantic shades,
Whene'er I wake the Teian string,
Will I invoke th' harmonious Maids
T' unlock Castalia's vaunted spring:
The palms of genius, thinly spread
Where cypresses o'er-arch the Dead,
Let others glean: — My raptur'd ear
Has caught the soul-enchanting ſtrains
Which on Salopia's happy plains
The bright Sabrina joys to hear;

IX.

She, blameless Nymph, whose piteous doom
Poetic Annalists relate,
Immers'd in Severn's watery tomb
By Guendoline's remorseless hate,
O'er the smooth current still presides,
And bids the spring-flowers on its sides
Diversify the broider'd green,
Where to the spheres' aërial sound
The light Fays trip their antic round
By meditating Shepherds seen;

x.

If worn Tradition's specious tales,
In Fiction's gaudy mantle dreſt,
Were wont to celebrate her vales
With Nature's bounteous treasures blest;
Fame, hiding more than half her blaze,
Reserv'd, to crown these later days,
Her greateſt, her most envied pride;
That while her banks *thy* numbers grace,
The Goddess sees *thy* fairer face
Reflected in her glassy tide.

xi.

Ask we, on what terrestrial plain
The Graces condescend to dwell,
When Thou, the lovelieſt of their train,
So aptly strik'st the chorded shell?
Whether from Bacchus' mighty race,
Or the dread Thunderer's stol'n embrace
Euphrosyne deriv'd her birth,
Regards not us: — Our dazzled sight
Struck with ineffable delight
Has found her parallel on earth.

L. Stern del. Romæ. *L.A. Faldoni inc.*

ODE III.

TO

THE DRYADS.

.....

Estimant les Nymphes des Bois plus heureuses Deesses que celles qui sur les autelz de marbre demeurent au superbes temples des grandes villes.

AMADIS DE GAULE.

.....

I.

YE Dryads of my grove, who tend
With plastic hand each drooping spray,

 And

And o'er yon trunks, with wanton bend,
Teach the wild woodbine's arms to stray,
In pleasing meditation laid
Where the thick pine's embowering shade
Hangs nodding o'er the lazy stream;
If you my artless song inspire,
Joyful I catch the chorded lyre
Impatient for the promis'd theme;

II.

And, lo! portray'd in vivid dyes
By Fancy's imitative hand,
The visionary forms arise,
And glitter through her fairy land:
With purple fruitage of the Vine
The Myrtle's amorous branches twine,
From noonday heat my brows to screen.
Can martial Glory's ample field,
Can Wisdom's hermitages, yield
A fairer, a less clouded scene?

III.

The slender pink, whose velvet bloom,
In tints so delicately pale,
Scatters around a rich perfume,
And gladdens all the neighbouring vale,
Is gather'd by some smiling maid,
Her loosely-flowing hair to braid;

On the bleak mountain's flinty side,
While the rude yew's unsightly stem
In vain expands it's noxious gem,
And boasts it's disregarded pride.

IV.

While thus, ye Nymphs, in grateful song
I celebrate this lov'd retreat,
Distinguish'd from the sordid throng
Who groveling bend at Plutus' feet,
Your duteous votary still instruct,
And safely to that port conduct
Where, shelter'd from the stormy tides
Which whelm the Slaves of Pomp or Gain
Beneath th' unfathomable main,
The philosophic Muse presides.

V.

Impregnating life's mingled bowl
With sweetest drugs, serenely gay
Ye steal upon the troubled soul.—
In times of innocence, your sway
Extended o'er Arcadia's plains;
Each shepherd in harmonious strains
Accompanied the flute of Pan;
From equal scales the Poet saw
Astræa's self dispensing law,
While Peace on Earth her reign began;

VI.

His soul with inspiration glow'd,
No interest urg'd a slavish theme,
But, as the careless numbers flow'd,
He lengthen'd out th' enchanting dream;
Bursting from Erymanthus' side,
Where Alpheus' renovated tide,
Again through fertile regions spread,
Rolls onward, till it reach the shade
To which Diana's votive maid
Obdurate Arethusa fled.

VII.

Or if, enthron'd in full-orb'd light,
Pale Cynthia's gliding chariot seen,
Dispell'd the vaulted gloom of night,
And glitter'd thro' the blue serene;
While thro' the calm sequester'd glade
In pensive attitude he stray'd,
Too firm to shrink from hovering dews,
Amid the tangled mazes, found
Your sprightly train his steps surround,
Prompted by each auspicious Muse.

VIII.

Then unsupported Reason's aid,
In Athens' venerable grove,
An altar heap'd with gifts display'd
Sacred to Universal Love,
From whence the Swan's ambitious flight
Soaring a more than usual height,
Was seen to cleave the liquid sky,
Emblem of Plato's generous soul
Rais'd far above yon starry pole
In Virtue's brighter galaxy.

IX.

But where is now Cephisus' fount,
Whose murmurs harmoniz'd the strain
Of gentle Bards, Hymettus' mount,
And silent Ceres' mystic fane?
O'er vanquish'd Freedom basely sold
When Macedon's seducing gold
Prevail'd; in that ill-fated hour
Each mead resign'd its blasted pride,
Each laurel shrunk its leaves, and died,
And every Nymph forsook her bower.

x.

In better days, tho' oft the throng
Of Satyrs, stung with mad desire,
By shameful dance, or impious song,
Invaded your astonish'd choir:
Tho' oft, alas! the ruthless hand
Of War, with desolating brand,
Has scath'd the foliage of your oaks,
Tho' oft, their hoary honors, spread
O'er the tall mountain's shelter'd head,
Have sunk beneath the Woodman's strokes:

xi.

Tho' in your sacred grots retir'd
The Druids with envenom'd breath
A thirst of homicide inspir'd;
Snatch'd from more honorable death,
To their polluted altars led,
Where erst the captive youth had bled
Midst holy Rancor's mutter'd charms,
In vain devoted Mona's shade
Implor'd your tutelary aid
O'erthrown by Rome's victorious arms:

XII.

Yet never gave your presence birth
To murders fell, to battles rude,
To taunting jests, or boisterous mirth,
Which on your favorite seats intrude;
Ye haunt not that licentious grove
Where Spenser's desperate Champions rove,
Your chaste ear loves not to be told
Of blatant beasts, of dread Despair,
With glaring eyes, with clotted hair,
And brutal chivalries of old.

XIII.

In Avignon's delightful shades,
Where Petrarch fix'd his lowly cell,
Perhaps, ye silver-footed Maids,
By cool Valclusa's ebbing well,
Ye deign to tend the rising flowers,
And bid the myrtle's shadowy bowers
A more enchanting fragrance shed;
And there the earliest rose is found,
Where, on the rude uncultur'd ground,
Your Bard reclin'd his sinking head;

XIV.

For there, engrav'd upon the rind
Of every plane, and spreading beech,
The fond complaints of love ye find,
Which move beyond the power of speech;
And where he shed the tender tear
O'er his departed Laura's bier,
To sooth her hovering shade, ye bring
The fragrant lilies of the vale,
And waft the soft refreshing gale
On welcome Zephyr's balmy wing.

XV.

But, oh, wherever ye reside,
If e'er the Muse's piercing eye
Could search the mystic scrolls which hide
The annals of futurity;
When Death shall break the scythe of Time,
Triumphant to some happier clime
The Shades of innocence aspire,
Where oft amidst his kindred groves
The Bard's exulting Spirit roves,
And joys to meet your social choir.

XVI.

Yes: They who erst content to move
In Poesy's sequester'd sphere,
Or wak'd the Cyprian lute of love,
Or bade mild Pity's starting tear
Bedew the couch of Misery, find
With strict Morality combín'd
Sweet Pleasure's mediating wiles;
There, seeking oft the Tuscan bowers
Where Horace pass'd his jocund hours,
E'en philosophic Rigor smiles.

[1762.]

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ODE IV.

TO

DISCRETION.

.....

Αδικον ατε ὑ-
-περοπλον ηβαν δρεπων, σωφι-
-αν δ' εν μυχοισι Πιεριδων. PINDAR.

.....

I.

THRO' every period of Life's fleeting day
Some different passion fills the breast,

From

From morn till night Hope leads astray,
Nor ever guides us to the port of rest:
Love's visionary joys inflame
Youth's eager wishes; next, Ambition's rage
Presents, in man's maturer stage,
Prospects of power and fame;
Old Age comes tottering last, unnerv'd and cold,
Grasping with palsied hand his ponderous bags of gold.

II.

The raptur'd Poet deems his earliest praise
To Fancy, sweet enchantress, due;
Amidst whose trackless groves he strays,
While fresh creations strike his dazzled view:
But soon the Muse's blossoms fade,
And Genius, born aloof in mid career,
Feels Envy, like Ithuriel's spear,
At one light touch, pervade
His frail contexture with a ghastly wound,
Or sinks an Icarus plung'd in the vast profound;

III.

Unless, o Goddess of the furrow'd brow,
Thy admonitions stay his flight,
And urge him first t' address his vow
Where thy pale shrine emits a glimmering light:

Too

Too long unmindful of thy power,
In Fiction's airy palaces I trod;
At length observant of thy nod,
To thee I kneel; o shower
Thy dews impregnated with balmy zest,
And let thy leaden mace fall weightier on my breast.

IV.

Thee, the Recluse Philosopher, whose frame
Shrinks at each Northern blast, reveres;
Elixirs his attention claim,
And warmest flannels huddle up his ears:
Nor art thou distant from the Maid
Whose unsought chastity maintain'd its hold
While o'er her forty suns have roll'd;
Yet, anxious for thy aid,
On thee she calls, whene'er, before her eyes,
Hibernian beaux, or too resistless coronets, rise.

V.

Swift rush the fiery steeds, loud sounds the car,
When Homer brings, severely just,
Assembling Demi-gods to war,
And lays proud Troy's adulterous towers in dust.
Had Menelaus search'd thy laws,
He there had learnt, without an augur's skill,

That

That women stray not 'gainst their will,
And, loth to furnish cause
To * Peleus for his slaughter'd son to chide,
Had wisely staid at home, and sought another bride.

VI.

Who from thy fount his inspiration draws,
Describes no Paladins in arms,
Nor paints, to gain the crowd's applause,
Armida's wiles, or Una's heavenly charms;
Nor lifts a Fairfax to the skies,
In Freedom's devious mazes led astray;
But haunts some courtly shrine, to pay
His duteous sacrifice;
Or sings, in Tusser's stile, of golden grain,
Of harrows, oxen, carts, and all the schemes of gain.

VII.

Since my green years, by some unhallow'd song,
Have made thee frown upon my suit;
Not where the snarling critic throng,
Fierce as a dragon, guard fair Learning's fruit,
Nor, in the busy walks of Trade,
Nor, will I seek thee, brooding o'er thy store,

* In the Andromache of Euripides, Peleus is introduced ridiculing the absurdity of Menelaus's expedition against Troy, and reproaching him with having caused the death of Achilles, and many other brave Grecians.

Behind the miser's churlish door,
Worn to a meagre shade,
Nor, in yon stalls, where th' orthodox divine
Snores, and with ven'son cramm'd extends his brawny chine.

VIII.

But to the regions of the Lunar sphere
My daring passage will I wing,
Where all things, lost by mortals here,
Are found, if rightly Ariosto sing:
There in some solitary vale,
Midst dark yews, bending from the rocky steep
O'er putrid lakes, whose waters sleep,
Mov'd by no freshening gale,
Shall I behold neglected Cassius' tomb,
To whose rash hand Fame's voice attributes Freedom's doom;

IX.

Vanquish'd he rais'd to Heaven his haggard eyes,
And bar'd his bosom to the stroke;
Calm gown-men say, "Had he been wise,
"And liv'd, Rome yet had scap'd Octavius' yoke."
Next, wandering thro' those shades forlorn,
Perchance the learn'd Christina may I see,
On earth who proudly slighted thee,
From every flatterer torn,
On Papal snares and venal Poets frown,
And wail with fruitless plaints her abdicated crown:

x.

Yet since from death thou canst not these unbind,
Their greatness claims no second birth,
To penitence incline thy mind,
And deign to waft me back again to earth;
Guarded by thee from every snare,
So shall I frame secure my placid lay;
Or, if in Satire's walks I stray;
With tutelary care
Arrest her venturous arm just rais'd to strike,
Smiling on friends, and foes, and all mankind alike.

[1767.]

ODE V.

TO

ROMANCE.

.....

Deos, Regesque, canit, Deorum
Sanguinem, per quos cecidere justâ
Morte Centauri, cecidit tremendæ
Flamma Chimeræ. HORACE.

.....

I.

IN vain does haughty man resign
Amusements that more harmlessly beguil'd

His

His little bosom while a child,
To pour his wasted incense at the shrine
Where ermin'd Grandeur calls her fawning train.
What can the glare of courts,
And specious trappings of the vain,
Amid those scenes of Fortune's sports,
The school-boy's pastimes to replace, supply,
But sadder games, and a more pompous foolery?

II.

Casting my Machiavel aside,
Scornful I loath the grave historic page,
The tumults of plebeian rage,
The venal senate's edicts, kingly pride;
And while thy magic thyrsus fills my hand,
Thy wreaths in vernal bloom,
Hung on yon stately pine, expand
Each braided floweret's rich perfume,
To thee, Romance, this altar will I raise,
Form'd of the living turf and deck'd with hawthorn sprays.

III.

'Tis thine to change the dreary scene
From regions fraught with penury and strife,
And wan Despair the bane of life,
To groves with myrtle foliage ever green.
What though in eddies strong the Northern blast
Howls o'er yon pathless wild,

Where starts the traveller aghast,
By thy delusive charms beguil'd,
Soon shall he see Palladian turrets rise,
And fruits of Hesperus glow beneath ideal skies.

IV.

Let Sages murmur as they will;
Better is fancied bliss than real woe;
Prais'd be the bounteous Fates who strew
Hope's vivid roses o'er the thorns of ill.
To bar the progress of La Mancha's knight,
Tho' visionary foes
In arms impenetrable fight,
And necromantic wiles oppose;
Call we that frenzy wretched, which could frame
Trophies so picturesque, such semblances of Fame?

V.

Once more, heroic Queen, advance
In all that pristine grace, those virtuous charms,
That rous'd Iberian sloth to arms,
And bring thy listed fields, thy ponderous lance,
Thy Fays swift gliding on the lunar beam:
Beyond this earthly sod,
Thou canst lift th' extatic theme
To scenes where mortal never trod;
For, at thy bidding, Fancy's realm supplies
Her dark Thessalian spells and wondrous sorceries.

VI.

Such was thy matchless power display'd,
When, from the billowy deep, old Ocean's child
Brave Amadis arose and smil'd;
His infant arm yet grasp'd the martial blade,
Presage of future worth and glorious deeds,
Revolving years soon strove
To nurture Honor's early seeds,
Then, fir'd with Oriana's love,
Dauntless he rush'd from Languine's roseate bowers,
And smote fierce Abies' host and Galpan's impious towers.

VII.

If, when Rome's genius seem'd to nod,
With mimic folly, under Tarquin's reign,
Great Brutus sought the votive fane,
While his rude staff conceal'd the golden rod;
Till in th' important crisis of her woes
Before Lucretia's bier
With awful energy he rose,
Nor shed the sympathetic tear;
But sternly lifting the stain'd dagger high,
Urg'd the dread test, th' immortal oath of liberty.

VIII.

Encompass'd by a groveling age,
While Science from the clouds of Gothic night
Emerging stream'd her faintest light,
So cautious Rabelais fill'd his sportive page,
To win the crowd, with many a random tale
Of Garagantua's might,
Bragmardo's eloquence, the whale,
And Panurge starting with affright;
Skill'd to give trifles a more heighten'd zest,
And grace with lively art th' inimitable jest:

IX.

But Wisdom's penetrating eye
Beheld him in a nobler task engage,
And burning with a generous rage,
Tho' Papal thunders menac'd from on high,
Bid his fantastic groupe, beneath the shade
Of Chinon's vines, advance;
And, while his Satire's torch display'd
The deeds of sainted Arrogance,
Rend Superstition's flimsy veil away,
Till every monkish fraud came rushing into day:

Around

X.

Around imperial Charles's throne,
While abject Poets, rang'd in deep array,
Attun'd their mercenary lay,
And talk'd of worlds reserv'd for him alone;
In Picrochole, our sage * Physician's art
Instanc'd that bitter spleen
With which Ambition ting'd his heart,
Till age remov'd each gaudier scene,
Stripp'd off his trappings in the Convent's gloom,
And sunk this man of blood beneath a living tomb.

XI.

When sea-girt Albion's favor'd land
Exulting heard Fame's loudest clarion raise
Its notes to sound Eliza's praise,
And Drake perform'd what Walsingham had plann'd;
In the gay tournament, with graceful mien,
Emulous nobles strove,
Banners of chivalry were seen
To glitter thro' the darksome grove;
Convinc'd that Beauty's smile o'erpaid his toils,
Th' exulting victor seiz'd and wore the glorious spoils:

* "Franciscus Rabelesus honos et gloria certa
"Artis Pæoniæ; qui vel de limine Ditis
"Extinctos revocare potest et reddere luci." DOLETUS.

XII. Then,

XII.

Then, not from fabled camps alone
Skilful to dart th' imaginary wound,
But in the thickest dangers found,
Young Sidney lov'd and claim'd thee for his own;
By him transplanted to this ruder shore,
Arcadian flowerets grew;
Whate'er from its unbounded store
In glowing tints his fancy drew
Of generous deeds or fix'd contempt of death,
Zutphen beheld, sad witness of his parting breath.

XIII.

Ere Luxury unnerv'd the strong,
And Dissipation to a system wrought
Had check'd each enterprizing thought,
Th' embellish'd legend to our grandsires long
Pictur'd atchievements not to fame unknown,
The fall of Pagan might,
Or chiefs that propp'd an Arthur's throne;
Each youth join'd profit to delight,
And saw St. George his country's weal defend,
Or shuddering fled from vice, and fear'd a Faustus' end.

XIV.

Perceforest's empire is o'erthrown,
Disbanded are the troops which Aymon led,
And now, with light and airy tread,
(Loose flows the vest bound by her dubious zone)
Applauded Novel rises, to whose name
Crowds adoration pay;
While drooping Nymphs of tender frame,
And Beaux more delicate than they,
Shriek if Sir Hargrave's plumes are soil'd with dust,
When Grandison's slow sword emerges from its rust.

XV.

Yet tho' Time snatch thy blunted spear
With envious grasp, and Fashion shade
Thy slighted charms, immortal maid,
Still do thy murmur'd sounds enchant my ear;
Still is thy image present to my sight;
Oft, led by thee, I stray
Midst groves and fountains of delight,
More pleas'd to glean one scanty bay,
Cultur'd by Genius, from thy wasted fields,
Than revel in the spoils unhallow'd Foppery yields.

[1769.]

SONG.

SONG.

I.

WHAT still does fair Lucy's disdain
Occasion this festering smart;
Cannot Time give relief to your pain,
And heal the slight wound in your heart?

II.

The arrows of Cupid, I know,
At first are all pointed with steel:
But how frail is the strength of his bow!
How fleeting the pang which we feel!

III.

His wings they are shatter'd by Time,
His quiver is soil'd in the dust;
Such, such, is Life's flowery prime,
And Beauty's most insolent trust.

IV.

Taste the joys a new passion can give,
With the Nymph that's complying and kind;
Or, learning more sagely to live,
Be blest, and give Love to the wind.

SONG

FROM THE FRENCH.

I.

COULD you guess, for I ill can repeat,
The sensation I'm destin'd to prove;
'Tis something than Friendship more sweet,
More passionate even than Love.

II.

For ever, when absent from you,
Pale Echo returns my fond sighs;
But when haply your beauties I view,
On my lips the faint utterance dies.

III.

This the secret I had to betray;
And the fate of my passion is such,
That in what I was prompted to say,
Methinks I have utter'd too much.

THE

EQUALITY

OF

MANKIND:

A

POEM.

.....

Man over Man
He made not Lord, such empire to himſelf
Reserving, Human left from Human free. MILTON.

At postquam exui *Æqualitas*, et pro modestiâ ac pudore, ambitio et vis incedebat, provenere Dominationes, multosque apud populos æternum mansere. TACITUS.

.....

THE

EQUALITY

OF

MANKIND.

.....

UNTAUGHT to bend the pliant knee, and join
The slaves who flock to Grandeur's tinsel shrine,
Kindling at thy perpetual flame the brand
Of honest Satire, with officious hand,
To thee, o Truth, I consecrate the blaze;
Receive, exalt, invigorate my lays:

Beneath

Beneath thy auspices, in Albion's plain,
While Justice triumphs in a George's reign,
Alone, yet scorning Caution's coward mask,
Will I encounter this adventurous task;
Though, far too sanguine to conceal their rage,
My foes already curse each opening page,
And Friends, half shrinking at so rude a test,
Glance o'er my Title, and forswear the rest.

The studious Pilgrim, as his bare feet tread
O'er holy Carmel, with religious dread,
If, sunk in mouldering rubbish, he descries
Where some old fane, or massive altar, lies,
Kneeling, adores it with a stedfast gaze,
And ruminates the works of mightier days,
Feasts his rapt soul on pure Devotion's fires,
And slowly from the much-lov'd spot retires.
Thus by dark Legend borne from clime to clime,
Surrounded with the ravages of Time,
Th' unwearied Muse asserts her liberal plan,
Nature's authentic privilege to scan;
To prove how Fiction and how Fact agree,
That God was just, and all Mankind were free.

Back to Creation's infancy, when Earth
Few revolutions dated from it's birth,
My theme invites:—poor Exile, doom'd to rove
Far from the sweets of Eden's happy grove,

Behold

Behold our first Progenitor; — his race,
Plung'd in a lineal series of disgrace,
Become a prey, from that ill-fated hour,
To want, disease, and Death's remorseless power.

Some evils soon attain'd their utmost prime,
To ripen others was a work of time.
Perhaps those ages, when no written Law
Kept the warm passions of Mankind in awe,
Were mark'd with deeds of outrage; from the fold,
Some stern oppressor of gigantic mould,
It's fleecy charge, it's Lord's sole treasure, bore,
And left the Shepherd weltering in his gore:
Yet then no plausible Declaimer made
Murder a system, War a licens'd trade;
Or, if they warr'd, 'twas for some obvious claim;
Their annals blazon no Porsenna's shame,
Commanding Rome her Tarquins to restore,
'Till mingled carnage heap'd Etruria's shore.
Coarse their precarious food, their dwelling small,
Open to each benighted stranger's call:
In some deep vale, beneath the sheltering wood
Of * casual turf compos'd, a shapeless altar stood;
By Gratitude's spontaneous impulse taught,
Thither, at intervals, the Rustic brought

* "Fortuitam cespitem." HOR.
"Altar of grassie sord." MILTON.

A decent offering from his little stock,
Fruits of the ground, or firstlings of his flock:
No Temple rear'd it's fretted roof on high,
No golden censer's blaze perfum'd the sky,
No vain High Priest with surly grandeur trod,
As if to shame the meanness of his God.

When, like the Titans, Earth's rebellious crew
To scale Heaven's bulwarks rais'd their threatening view,
In vain, their boastful arrogance to quell,
Their Leaders were dispers'd, their Turret fell:
On Shinar's plains Despotic Power unfurl'd
Her banner, and, to vex the groaning world,
From shore to shore the strange contagion ran,
Fraternal concord ceas'd, and Monarchy began.

Thus, while the storms in hollow caverns sleep,
And scarce a Zephyr fans the quiet deep,
A cumbrous fragment, from th' impending side
Of yonder rock disjointed, on the tide
Comes rushing downward; boils the vast profound,
Waves upon waves dash'd on the beach resound.

Detested Hunter! Nimrod led the way,
War was his savage pastime, man his prey;
For brutal strength by trembling vassals fear'd,
The walls of antient Babylon he rear'd;

In his high dome, with crayons rude portray'd,
The Victor's dread atchievements were display'd:
Here pierc'd with darts th' expiring tiger lay,
There rush'd embattled hosts in firm array;
Till in his car the thickest ranks he broke,
And nations yielded to his galling yoke.

Such Empire's origin; — with horrid yell
From the black confines of their native hell
Emerg'd the Demon of tyrannic pride,
And Vice came onward with a larger stride;
Ungrateful were the task, an endless toil,
To trace their progress through each distant soil
Manur'd with carnage: Force and Fraud combin'd
To stupefy, beguile, enslave Mankind.
Dominion first was gain'd by lawless might;
Claims of divine Hereditary Right
Succeeded, when, to varnish o'er each flaw,
And bow the world with superstitious awe,
The Priests dress'd up some phantom of their own,
Call'd him a Monarch, plac'd him on a Throne,
Cajol'd the weakness of those darker times,
And dragg'd-in Heaven to sanctify his crimes.

Search well it's inmost source, and tell whence springs
This sacred claim of Israel's vaunted Kings.
When that audacious crew renounc'd their God,
Despis'd his mercies, brav'd his heaviest rod,

And, for his patronage too mighty grown,
Fashion'd these Idols to their Sires unknown,
Say, did their Prophet urge Saul's Right Divine?
His incense blaz'd not at so vile a shrine.
Or, did some ill in mystic leaves foretold,
And chronicled by gravest Seers of old,
While on delusive hopes they fondly built,
O'erwhelm them with involuntary guilt?
No, 'twas their pride which knew not how to yield,
Their rage for conquests in the tented field,
That 'gainst Heaven's Umpire warp'd th' untoward crew,
And on their heads a just perdition drew.

From that black period, each intenser crime,
That brands with infamy it's parent clime,
Assail'd the palace, overspread the land,
And in their temple took it's impious stand.

The seat of Chemosh by the purple vine
Was planted; and, at Moloch's brazen shrine,
As, with inhuman zeal, the trembling Sire
Consign'd his shrieking infants to the fire,
While with loud din their hideous cymbals rung,
His worshipers obscene their uncouth orgies sung.

Belief, in various senses understood,
Is Man's severest curse, or most substantial good.

Thus

Thus in the meads where hallow'd Jordan glides,
Enriching Palestine with copious tides,
Where cedars wave, where streams the fragrant oil,
Where loaded vineyards bless the peasant's toil,
Deep in the heart of Siddim's odious vale,
Impregnating with death each tainted gale,
The black Asphaltes from it's slimy bed
Sees pitchy clouds, sulphureous vapours, spread.

Let Mecca tell, big with aspiring schemes,
Seraphic trances, counterfeited dreams,
How subtle Mahomet, of servile birth,
Diffus'd his tenets through th' astonish'd earth;
By fire and sword the Nations undeceiv'd,
Renounc'd their antient errors, and believ'd.

In Judah's soil the tree of knowledge grew,
Whose fruit, unsound, yet specious to the view,
Entrusted to the treacherous Levites' care,
Fell ere it ripen'd in that baleful air:
Relentless Cowards! with a brutal hand
Urging their fraudful progress through the land,
O'er Nature's parting agonies they trod,
And slaughter'd millions in the name of God,
Each right of arms infringing, nor forbore
To dip their reeking blades in infant gore;
Till slighted Conscience, whose impartial call
Opes the dread volume of her laws to all,

Bewail'd them darken'd by so strong a taint,
That none discern'd the Villain from the Saint.

Far other fame the Christian doctrine gain'd,
From Heaven transmitted, and by Heaven maintain'd;
With scepter'd arrogance to vex the world,
Vaunting his blood-stain'd banners wide unfurl'd,
To make divided Faith and Virtue foes,
On it's firm base no SECOND * DAVID rose:
Yet from this pure and unpolluted source
Ere long the streams in a perverted course
Ran foul: Fanatics soon began to call
Good works an empty sound, Faith all in all;
Pontiffs and Priests the bonds of Nature tore,
And drench'd their altars with a flood of gore.

Arm'd with the Cross, for Salem's promis'd land,
Unnumber'd troops embark at Rome's command,
Led by a frantic Hermit, who aloud
To deeds of horror instigates the crowd;
Zeal goads them onward, and with ruthless joy
They come, they sack, they ravish, they destroy.

* David, though an Inspired Writer, was forbidden to build the Temple, on account of his being "a man of blood:" Scripture traces the Messiah's genealogy from this Jewish Monarch, but at the same time expressly assures us that *his* Kingdom is not of this World.

By these disastrous records unconfin'd,
The Muse, whom no chronology can bind,
From civil tumults and religious strife
Escaping, takes a fairer view of Life;
Borne on the rapid wings of Thought, she flies,
Opes new creations, and in other skies
Expatiates, sooth'd with all that Ovid told
Of cloudless suns, of Ages wing'd with gold,
Those Ages, when, in Peneus' chearful grove,
Man knew no sorrows, no disease but Love;
At Nature's call an artless lyre he strung,
His only beverage was the fount he sung.

Ye times of innocence (in life's gay morn
Dear to the Bard, exploded now with scorn)
When none the image of his God belied,
No Minions crouch'd beneath a Sultan's pride,
No Gold ensnar'd, no Poverty distress'd,
No Hypocrites beguil'd, no Kings oppress'd;
Though doom'd to grovel in a baser age,
Will I from Memory's enchanting page
Retrace your scatter'd annals: — when of old
Arcadia's peaceful Shepherds uncontroll'd
Their ranging flocks to boundless pastures drove,
Or tun'd their pipes beneath the myrtle grove,
Their Laws, on brazen tablets unimpress'd,
Were deeply grav'd on each ingenuous breast,

No proud vicegerent of Astræa reign'd,
Astræa's self her own decrees maintain'd.

Books, useless lumber, yet in embryo slept,
No Damon rav'd in print, no Delia wept;
All moral actions in one balance weigh'd,
Nor had, nor needed they, the Casuist's aid:
For Nature, best of mothers, pleas'd to teach
Virtues no modern Theorist can reach,
With characters indelible, on high
Blazon'd her system of Equality.

Alas! how gladly would Illusion's beam
For ever vibrate on this rapturous theme:
Here let me finish; nor, my soul to wring,
From Fable's sweets proceed to Fable's sting:
I must; — these fairy dreams have had their space,
And now the dreadful sequel claims a place.
Like the presumptuous Mariner, whose sails
Wafted from port by soft Etesian gales,
Urge his o'erweening eagerness, to brave,
Without a pilot, the perfidious wave,
Soon o'er whose bark impetuous tempests sweep,
And bury all his fortunes in the deep:
Seduc'd by Fancy's charms, amidst a grove
Of pleasing errors have I dar'd to rove,
Till, half desponding, comfortless, aghast,
I but survey bright Freedom's form at last,

To see her perish, by as sure a wound,
'Mid these enchantments, as on vulgar ground.

Fond Epimetheus! when thy luckless hand
Scatter'd Pandora's curses o'er the land,
Forth from the casket, glittering to the view,
Scepters and crowns, delusive trumpery, flew;
Man ey'd the bait, and, with an idiot joy,
Eagerly rush'd to snatch the gilded toy.
Freedom thenceforth, and Peace, and Justice fled,
From Erebus fell Discord rear'd her head;
Too late Remorse congeal'd each guilty soul,
And forky lightnings flash'd from pole to pole.

Where'er we search the vast instructive page
Of Fact or Fiction, we in every age
See slaughter'd millions bite th' ensanguin'd dust,
To sooth a Tyrant's pride, a Strumpet's lust:
Till, loathing both the present and the past,
We learn this melancholy truth at last:
"On Life's rough sea, by stormy passions tost,
"Freedom and Virtue were together lost."

Shame on our vaunted reason, when we find
No creature else so senseless and so blind:
The Brutes indeed to force superior yield,
And leave the Lion master of the field;

Yet

Yet this imperial claim to none descends,
With the possessor's strength his title ends;
Nor, if an enterprising leader calls,
Do they forsake their well-replenish'd stalls,
And, with heroic frenzy, in some strife
Disclaim'd of Heaven, exulting risk their life:
Unfall'n and uncorrupted, they fulfil
Their nature's wise intent, their Maker's will.
Stoop then, ye vain Philosophers, and own
Reason from Man to happier beasts is flown.

View first the Slave, his misery first deplore,
In galling fetters, to some foreign shore
Borne from his dearest home, there vilely sold
By those who truck humanity for gold,
Abus'd, neglected, sinking with distress,
When all is dark, and Hope alone can bless;
E'en then, through Life's thick curtain, he descries
Some haven, where, beneath serener skies,
Oppression never lifts her impious hand,
No Sons of Europe desolate the land.

The Peasant follows; he, with endless toil
Harshly requited, tills the rugged soil,
Expos'd to wanton insults from the Great,
Pinch'd by the prodigality of state:
Yet his low couch no thorny cares molest,
His even spirits yield unbroken rest.

Those

Those motley Beings next in order place,
Whose wavering stations wear a doubtful face,
Who, dragg'd by Fortune into middle life,
That vortex of malevolence and strife,
Envying the great, and scoffing at the mean,
Now swoln with pride, now wasted with chagrin,
Like Mahomet's unsettled ashes dwell,
Midway suspended between Heaven and Hell.

Clad with those titles antient Justice gave,
To grace the wise, the generous, and the brave,
O'er these ascend the Sycophants of power,
Their master's tools, the minions of an hour.

Last of the group, to close this irksome scene,
Childishly great, and eminently mean,
Amidst his Eastern Vassals thron'd on high
The Monarch fixes our indignant eye;
E'en thro' the toil which earns the Hind's coarse bread,
His splendor is maintain'd, his luxury fed;
Till by impartial Fate in dust are laid
The rich, the poor, the scepter and the spade.

When lust, when rapine, when ungovern'd rage,
Strongly characteriz'd the iron age,
Vengeance became a necessary ill,
Guilt edg'd the sword, guilt added force to kill.

Let Kings support afflicted Virtue's cause,
Curb proud transgressors, and maintain the Laws;
Our high respect deservedly they share,
Not for themselves, but for the trust they bear.

As on this slippery pinnacle they stand
Awhile exalted, if with haughty hand
They wield the rod of Empire; to the skies
Ascend the Widow's tears, the Orphan's cries;
A Cato's spirit, or a Cicero's tongue,
With keen resentment animates the throng;
Some Hampden hears his gasping Country's groan,
And from it's basis rends a guilty throne.

Should inauspicious Fortune bear away
From Virtue's grasp the triumphs of a day;
Should Tyranny, in bloated pomp grown great,
Crush the devoted victims of her hate;
Grim Superstition, with an haggard eye,
Points to the spoils, and rears her torch on high,
From Regal Conquest her own inference draws,
And blends with that of Heaven it's dearer cause.

Blind to the treacherous snare, when Fate decreed
That Troy should perish by the Wooden Steed;
The rest stood mute with hesitating fear,
Dauntless Laocoon hurl'd his forceful spear

Against

Against the monster, from whose knotty side
Resounding arms and Grecian shrieks replied:
Stung by envenom'd serpents he expir'd,
With stupid gaze while awe-struck throngs admir'd;
Till, ever ready at Imposture's call,
Augurs explain'd the secret of his fall;
" To angry Gods was such atonement due,
" The sacrilegious wretch Minerva slew."

When virtuous Grevile * thus, in civil strife,
Crown'd with an honest prayer his closing life;
Indignant we behold that vaunted Sage,
Sententious Clarendon, whose high-flown page,
Midst tortur'd facts, and Scripture-phrases quaint,
Shews half the subtle Lawyer, half the Saint,
Stamp on his ashes with a dotard's pride,
And execrate the cause in which he died.

Let him who weeps o'er Man's too fleeting date
Compare the Hero's with th' Historian's fate,
Soar 'bove the prejudic'd misjudging throng,
Nor over-value Life for lasting long.
At Honor's summons, by a ghastly wound
Transfix'd, the Patriot Warrior bit the ground;

* Lord Brooke, " who is said, the morning before he was killed, to " have prayed, that if the cause he were in was not just and right, he " might be presently cut off." History of Rebellion, Vol. II. p. 149, 8vo. Oxford, 1731.

While

While Hyde, neglected in the vale of years,
Conscious of guilt *, and stung with boding fears,
Disgracefully constrain'd to quit the helm,
Escap'd from Justice, sought a foreign realm.

Ye fields of Naseby, where the thundering hand
Of Freedom greatly prosper'd, where that band
Of hardy Patriots resolutely bore
Through storms of horror, and through seas of gore,
Their Country's Charter, snatch'd from Kingly power,
And Sacredotal wrath; oft as your Tower,

* The Clarendon State Papers bring to light the following passage, in a letter of his Lordship's to Mr. Baron, written at no great distance from the time when Dorislaus was assassinated at the Hague, and Ascham at Madrid; not to mention the attempts afterwards made on the life of Ludlow in Switzerland: "if Desborough's bloody humour be so gene-"rally confessed, SOME MEN SHOULD THINK TO BE BEFOREHAND WITH "HIM †." Such language, adopted by every hypocritical coward who sharpens the bravoe's dagger against his enemies, is too plain to require a commentary, or to admit of any subterfuge. It is well known that Desborough was not actually murdered; but the precise words are taken down, to shew that the writer, from his situation as "Keeper of the "then-exil'd Charles's Conscience," was acquainted with such designs, and that he countenanced them. On the Articles of Impeachment against Lord Clarendon, which produced his ignominious and dastardly flight, it would be superfluous to expatiate; as the supreme Court of Judicature pronounced their authentic decision of Banishment.

† Vol. III. page 468.

Conspicuous

Conspicuous on whose summit Até wrote
Strong characters, and blasted where she smote,
In youth's gay season fix'd my roving eye,
How did I hail that scene of Victory!
E'en now methinks I see brave Fairfax tread
Th' ensanguin'd plain; — to bind the Warrior's head,
From Fame's unsullied grove, let Virtue bring
Those laurels green with everlasting spring;
Illustrious meed, too oft profusely strewn
Around the precincts of Ambition's throne,
To deck some proud infringer of the Laws:
But due to Vengeance, due to Britain's cause.

Nor, though the Muse o'er wastes unbounded stray,
Reft of the hope to glean one fragrant bay,
Bleak Caledonia! shalt thou pass unsung:
What shouts from every Grampian summit rung,
When thy firm sons, who lov'd the public weal,
With indignation saw malignant Zeal,
Eager to substitute her loath'd parade,
The decent worship of their sires invade;
And rushing onward, like a mighty flood
Burst from its channel, seal'd their faith with blood:
In courtly pomps and amorous dalliance bred,
At their approach while perjur'd Holland fled,
And Mitred Hierarchy, ordain'd no more
To dip her consecrated robes in gore,

By Knox's arm first levell'd with the ground,
Now from their spears receives a second wound;
Ere long, in pity to that harass'd land,
Finally crush'd by generous William's hand *.

Curse on the shouts of that licentious Throng,
Whose merriment (more brutal than the Song
Of mad Agavé, when wild Hæmus o'er
Her Pentheus' mangled limbs the Mother bore)
Proclaims the fall of Liberty.—Ye shades
Of mighty Chiefs, from your Elysian glades
Look down benign, avert the dire presage,
Nor with two Charleses brand one sinful age.
O my poor Country! what capricious tide
Of Fortune swells the Tyrant's motley pride!

* The persecuting conduct of Scotch Bishops, from Cardinal Beaton down to Archbishop Sharp, is sufficiently attested in the impartial pages of Rapin. On the subject of English or Irish Episcopacy, the author is totally silent: but, in reply to those who call the Presbyterian form of Church Government in Scotland an innovation, he begs leave to produce the following extracts from a respectable historian:

"Ad id usque tempus, Ecclesiæ, absque Episcopis, per monachos rege-
"bantur, minore quidem cum fastu et externâ pompâ, sed majore sim-
"plicitate et sanctimoniâ."

Anno 452. Buchanani Opera Burmanni, 4to, vol. I. p. 142.

"Neque enim adhuc apud Scotos pervenerat consuetudo Sacerdotia
"Sacerdotiis cumulandi, et malè per avaritiam quæsita pejùs per luxu-
"riem profundendi." Anno 1466. Ib. vol. I. p. 413.

Around

Around his brows yon servile Prelates twine
The stale and blasted wreath of Right Divine;
While Harlots, like the Coan Venus fair,
Move their light feet to each lascivious air.

Hence with your orgies! righteous Heaven ordains
A purer worship, less audacious strains.
When falls by William's sword, as soon it must,
This edifice of Bigotry and Lust;
The Muse shall start from her inglorious trance,
And give to Satire's grasp the vengeful lance:
Thee, Albemarle, thee, who to Charles the reins
Of Empire gav'st, with ignominious chains
Binding thy country, shall th' historic page
Penn'd by the Genius of some nobler age
Consign to shame: let those who deem well sold
For empty titles or for sordid gold
The war-worn Veteran's sacred honor, know
Each proud distinction Monarchs can bestow
Flames but like beacons o'er a Traytor's grave,
Shunn'd by the wife, the virtuous, and the brave.

No cold despair the generous breast appalls:
Oft vanquish'd, gathering through repeated falls,
Antæus like, new vigor, till she broke
The force of Stuart Kings, the Pontiff's yoke,
By Boyne's swift current, Freedom rear'd her head,
As from Hibernian realms the Tyrant fled:

Then every vale with Io Pæans rung,
While the glad Reaper at his harvest sung
Thee, great Nassau, benevolently brave,
'Twas thine to conquer, and 'twas thine to save.
Across the briny deep to Gallia's shore
When Mars the shouts of British Freedom bore,
Dismay'd she saw the flame intensely burn,
And Seine hung trembling o'er her wasted urn.

Crown'd with Heaven's choicest gift, a liberal mind,
Friends to the native rights of Human-kind,
The Brunswick line improve th' adopted plan,
And rear the fabric which Nassau began.
Thrice happy Albion! in whose favor'd land
Impartial Justice, with a steady hand,
Poises the scales of Empire; where the names
Of servile tenure, and the feudal claims
Of Norman Peers, in musty tomes decay,
Swept by obliterating years away.

But if thy Children, to themselves untrue,
With envy stung, through false perspectives, view
The rising sun of Liberty display,
O'er long-benighted realms, a chearing ray,
And league with Despots, to replace that yoke
Which Gallic tribes in thousand fragments broke,
While, measuring right and wrong by gold alone,
Under State Quacks thy trampled Cities groan;

Soon

Soon fall thou must, though myriads guard thy shore,
As Tyre and Carthage fell, to rise no more.

Born in a changeful clime, beneath a sky
Whence storms descend, and hovering vapors fly,
Stung with the fever, tortur'd with the spleen,
Boisterously merry, churlishly serene,
By each vague blast, dejected or elate,
Dupes in their love, immoderate in their hate,
With starch'd formality, or bearish ease,
Then most disgustful when they strive to please,
No happy mean the sons of Albion know,
Their wavering tempers ever ebb and flow,
Rank contraries, in nothing they agree,
Too proud to serve, too abject to be free *.

While thus, o Truth, inspir'd with honest zeal,
To thee, protectress of my lays, I kneel;
Deign to exhibit in their real light,
Stript of that glare which cheats the dazzled sight,
The Chiefs, whose blazon'd deeds and sounding worth
Usurp a sphere above the Sons of Earth;
Ope vast Futurity's instructive gloom,
Conduct me to the mansions of the tomb,
Where titles cease, where worldly pomp is o'er,
Mute are the Nine, and Flattery sooths no more:

* Qui ne peut ni servir ni vivre en liberté. VOLTAIRE, Henriade.

So may I take a more impartial view,
Forget the Rank, and give the Man his due.

Yet what regards it or the world or me,
How Fame awards her posthumous decree,
If Man, unconscious of her loudest breath,
Sleep a cold tenant in the vale of Death?
Let the delirious Siamois compute
How Sommonokodon his worship'd Brute
Through Being's long progressive stages trod,
Began an Ox, and ended in a God.
Our fleeting Souls let him of Samos * trace
In birds, in beasts, and all the finny race;
These baseless structures, fictions light and vain,
Coin'd in the foldings of an idle brain,
To their inventors I with joy resign,
They are not in the Church's creed or mine.

But shall the Peasant, from his turf-bound grave,
Or rise no more, or wake again a slave?
And shall the Monarch, in a future state,
With the same visionary pomp elate,
Resume the trappings of his lost command,
And wield a mimic scepter in his hand?
If on these terms, to thee, o Truth, we live,
What joys, what honors, what hast thou to give?

* Pythagoras.

Though

Though gloomy Bigots paint a partial God,
Bare his red arm, and lift his scorpion rod;
Though on a text perverting Casuists dwell
Till Scripture suits the purposes of hell:
Think for thyself; — suppose Life's voyage o'er,
Think for thyself, and envy Kings no more:
Resign'd and calm await that aweful hour,
That crisis of all sublunary power,
When wreaths of glory shall adorn the just,
And Empire's proud Colossus sink to dust.

POSTCRIPT.

.....

Quod Regum tumidas contuderit minas. HORACE.

.....

LONG ere the martial progeny of France
'Gainst banded Despots hurl'd th' unerring lance,
Drove Superstition from her wide domain,
And rais'd to Liberty a votive fane;
These artless notes the rustic Muse began,
Chanting with feeble voice the Rights of Man:
Now Age o'ershadowing damps poetic fire,
And Time's rude hand hath snatch'd away her lyre,
When for its gratulating strains might call,
O Babylon, thy long-predicted fall;
Still sooth'd by Hope, disdaining abject Fears,
She stands collected in the vale of years,
Imploring Him who bids the tempest cease
To wrap th' infuriate World in lasting Peace,
Nor suffer Statesmen, rancorous, vain, and blind,
For Priests, or Peers, or Kings, to sacrifice Mankind.

AUGUST 7, 1797.

ON

MR. HOLLIS'S PRINT

OF THE

REVEREND DR. MAYHEW.

.....

Pro quo magnificè vivunt, turgentque saginâ:
Quid prosunt autem populo? quem Ecclesia fructum
Percipit? hâc totâ an non posset gente carere,
Tum bene quam lippis oculi, plantæque podagrâ?

NAOGEORGUS.

.....

ERE civil Strife, on Boston's menac'd shore,
Bade her loath'd ensigns wave, her cannons roar,
Episcopacy, fraught with Circe's art,
Angled for each ambitious Churchman's heart;
Portent malign, in gorgeous chariot drawn,
Her robes immaculate of whitest lawn
Stream'd in the gale, the cloven Mitre spread
Its wide effulgence round her saintly head.
With visage wan, Trade ey'd the bloated Pest,
Desponding Freedom to her altars press'd,
Till Mayhew rose, th' enchantment to confound,
His breath dispell'd the clouds that gather'd round;

The

The venom'd Snake, the Thong that binds the Slave,
Became conspicuous to the wise and brave:
Then, like the Raven issuing from the Ark,
To bring no Olive-branch, but night-shade dark,
At length some baleful wind the Spectre bore,
In mimic pomp to Caledonia's shore;
There by proscrib'd * Fanatics was she nurs'd,
And, hastening back, vain-glorious as at first,
In the same haughty tone presum'd to rave
O'er her Antagonist's untimely grave.

Thus Mayhew warr'd, stanch in a generous cause,
Crown'd with that best reward, unsought applause;
What though for him the dread behests of Fate
On earth reserv'd no Nestor's lengthen'd date,
Favor'd of Heaven, he liv'd not to behold
His Country ravag'd by the slaves of Gold,
It's Cities sack'd, it's Temples rapt in flame,
Long years of guilt, of horror, and of shame:

* Dr. Seabury's *pretended* Consecration, by a junto of nonjuring Scotch Ecclesiastics assuming to themselves the Episcopal Office, is discussed in the Appendix. Mr. Daubeny's remark about "*my Friends*" compells me to state, that there is the same analogy between the above-mentioned counterfeit Prelates and the Ministers of any Church, either established or duly registered under the Toleration Act, as between an itinerant Mountebank and a Fellow or Licentiate in the College of Physicians: disclaimed both by the Church of England and the Church of Scotland, they can put away their lawn sleeves with as little ceremony as Harlequin doffs his party-coloured jacket.

But,

But, to his kindred skies though soon assign'd,
Bequeath'd a bright example to Mankind,
Of one firm Priest, whose unpolluted soul
No lust of gain could warp, no threats control:
He chose the steep ascent, the narrower way,
Leaving the Great to flatter and betray.

APPENDIX.

.....

THE Rev. C. Daubeny, Minister of Christ's Church, Bath, having charged the Author with "Untruth," the following letter was written under an idea that Acts of Parliament bore some authority even among Ecclesiastics. This Polemic had not yet declared open war against common sense, by exhibiting his parody from Cicero: "Malo cum "Episcopo errare, quam cum Presbyteris rectè sentire."

Sir,

A note in your Letters to Sir Richard Hill is pointed out to me, and demands some answer. You there call what I have said of "Dr. Seabury's *pretended* Conse- "cration, by a junto of nonjuring Scotch Ecclesiastics, "assuming to themselves the Episcopal Office, *an un-* "*truth.*"

At the Revolution, the deprived Scotch Bishops were placed on a similar footing with their Brethren in England who refused the Oath of Allegiance to King William: the latter have been praised for nominating no successors, and for leaving the schism to evaporate with their own lives; what motives the former had, for adopting an opposite line of conduct, was best known to themselves. How far

far they were justified in so doing, during the period which intervened between the Abdication of King James and the last Rebellion, is at least questionable: the Act of 1746 prohibited their Religious Assemblies; which from the first were in the eye of the Law mere Conventicles, not licensed Meeting-houses. This completely vitiates the titles of all who have started up for these last fifty years; being no Bishops themselves, they have no more authority to consecrate others than the Inn-keeper had to dub Don Quixote a Knight. Dr. Skinner and Dr. Gleig are welcome to write as many Histories and Apologies as they think fit: the unrepealed Statute shews, that the terms which I have used are expressly dictated by the Laws of my Country.

For a man to print, unless he have made up his mind to encounter "evil report and good report," praise and censure, blended as they reach him, without either vanity or vexation, would in all ordinary instances be perfectly ridiculous. But the charge, which you, Sir, have brought forward against me is of a very singular nature, and must have been taken up in such haste, as precluded all accurate examination. None can be more aware than I am, that the only prospect of passing through life with any tolerable degree of credit is by maintaining an unimpeached veracity.

I am, Sir,

Your most obedient and most humble servant,

London, Nov. 21, 1799. M. WODHULL.

After

After six weeks had elapsed, a common Friend waited on Mr. Daubeny; that Gentleman's refusal to apologize occasioned the above to be printed in the Morning Chronicle, Jan. 10, and Cruttwell's Bath Chronicle, Jan. 9, 1800; soon after, a very respectable Correspondent favored Mr. Wodhull with the following clear and decisive opinion.

'Ch. 38, 19 Geo. II. This Act was made, effectually to 'prevent and prohibit Ministers from officiating in Epis- 'copal Meeting-houses in Scotland, without duely quali- 'fying according to Law.

"Sect. 9. After Sept. 1, no Letters of Orders of any "Ministers of an Episcopal Meeting in Scotland shall be "deemed sufficient to be registered, but such as have "been given by some Bishop of the Church of Eng- "land or Ireland; and any other Letters of Orders shall "be (though registered) void to all intents."

'Ch. 24, 21 Geo. III. This was an Act to explain a 'Clause in another Act, made in the same Year, relating 'to Letters of Orders of Episcopal Ministers in Scotland.

'Sect. 11. For the better ascertaining what shall be 'deemed exercising the Function of a Chaplain, within 'the meaning of the above Act: "Be it enacted, that, "after Sept. 29, 1748, any Person being in Holy Orders, "of any Denomination (other than the Ministers of the "Established Church of Scotland), who shall preach or "perform

" perform Divine Service in any House of which he is not " Master, in the Presence of any other Person or Persons, " shall be deemed one who exercises the Function of a " Chaplain within the meaning of the said Act."

' On considering the Statute of the 19th Geo. II. both ' in respect to the Letter of it and the Spirit of it, I am ' of opinion, that the Scotch Bishops have no powers ' vested in them sufficient for Consecration, nor can they ' grant Letters of Orders.'

THE

THE USE OF POETRY.

Her track, where'er the Goddess roves,
Glory pursue, and generous Shame,
Th' unconquerable Mind, and Freedom's holy flame. GRAY.

IF, blazon'd by the Muse, Calypso's smile,
The Sirens' melody, Acrasia's isle
Peopled with Graces ever blithe and young,
Nymphs such as Titian drew, or Ovid sung,
In life's gay morn my fancy could engage
Ere Time display'd Reflection's sober page:
At length the fond illusion charms no more:
Haste we those distant ages to explore,
When Poesy, to real merit just,
Around the Patriot's tomb, or Sage's bust,
Twin'd amaranthine chaplets, and withstood
The thunderbolts of fell Oppression's brood.

As once, in Egypt's miserable realm,
Some proud unfeeling Statesman seiz'd the helm,

With specious words assailing Pharaoh's throne,
Deaf to a trampled nation's loudest groan,
Their bricks exacting when depriv'd of straw,
His nod like Jove's, his wild caprice was law,
Till, to perdition doom'd, beneath the tide,
With all his host o'erwhelm'd, the Monarch died:
When under Tyranny the World lay mute,
The Form Divine degraded to the Brute;
A new device the Bards of Phrygia found,
They e'en to things inanimate gave sound:
Æsop, a slave, drew from the knotted oak
Harmonious accents, solid marble spoke;
Man's advocates, amid th' enchanted grove,
Were mingled birds and dragons seen to rove;
With language furnish'd to disclose his wrongs,
They utter'd truths too bold for human tongues.

Here the vile Churl, turn'd Financier, we 're told,
Ripp'd up his Goose to snatch her eggs of gold.
The patient Ass, gall'd by a ponderous load,
There slowly jogg'd along the miry road,
Blows mov'd him not: at length, "The Foe draws near,"
His master cried, "O quicken your career!"
The half-starv'd Beast replied; "Why speed my flight?
"Come when they will, I shrink not with affright.
"Can any Foreign Lord, betide what may,
"With greater cruelty my toils repay?"

Through

Through Greece, where Liberty's auspicious shrine
Long blaz'd unsullied with a flame divine,
Heights more sublime behold the Muse ascend,
Fair Virtue's harbinger, her Country's friend;
The wreaths from Persia's vanquish'd Despots torn
She bore, Minerva's altars to adorn;
Her choral pomp then swell'd the Tragic stage,
Where Pella's Bard *, to charm a generous age,
Presents his Theseus, eloquent, and brave;
Who to th' Athenian state its pandects gave,
Rising with stedfast purpose to maintain,
Or in the Senate or embattled plain,
The Sovereign People's Majesty, a theme
Familiar then, now term'd an empty dream;
Or, while a sense of past atchievements swells
Each kindling breast with patriot ardor, tells
How the twain Chiefs, sprung from that dauntless Sire,
Repuls'd the Herald of Eurystheus' ire,
To great Alcides' banish'd Children just,
And laid Mycené's Tyrant low in dust.

O'er Latian meads, in Freedom's evil hour,
Beneath the zenith of Imperial Pow'r,
Intrepid Lucan roam'd; he nobly paid
Th' harmonious dirge to vanquish'd Pompey's shade,

* Euripides. See his "Suppliants" and "Children of Hercules." "The twain Chiefs" are Acamas and Demophoon, Theseus' sons.

And echo'd godlike Cato's loud applause,
Who dar'd to perish in a virtuous cause.

Th' outrageous pride of Stuart Kings to quell,
And crush oppression; from the shades of hell,
When Vengeance, issuing with remorseless frown,
Tore from a Charles's brows the sullied Crown,
Britannia's champion, Milton, wak'd the lyre;
Scorning the Pedant's guile, the Bigot's ire,
He sung those Chiefs Fame's sacred annals boast,
Chiefs who to conquest led their patriot host,
And, with a soul unwarp'd by vulgar awe,
Asserted the supremacy of Law:
Nor, when another Charles, in pomp restor'd,
By Mitred Slaves and Prostitutes ador'd,
With his gay troop on Freedom's banners trod,
Crouch'd to the Tyrant's throne, or hail'd this earth-born God.

The torch of Liberty, in later days,
Blazes awhile, and smouldering soon decays.
Those laurels Phœbus planted, to adorn
The youthful * Akenside's illustrious morn,

* Most of Dr. Akenside's Poems were written in his youth: he died at the age of forty-nine, having been several years before appointed one of the Queen's Physicians. The passages noticed may be found in his Odes to the Right Honourable Charles Townshend, to Dr. Hardinge, and on leaving Holland: Lord Shaftesbury was then the object of his panegyric; but we in vain look for "Ashley's wisdom" in a later edition, published under the auspices of Jeremiah Dyson, Esq.

When

When he, th' apostate Statesman to confound,
Made Thames's banks proud Strafford's fall resound,
In magic numbers eager to unfold
" What day the People's stern decree is told
" To unbelieving Kings," soon, wanting root,
At his meridian hour produc'd no vigorous shoot;
All " Ashley's wisdom," join'd with " Hampden's arms,"
Then from his page effac'd, had lost its charms,
The Heaven-born Muse descended from her sphere,
His parting lays were tun'd for Dyson's ear.

Hull's * Senator, portray'd by Mason's hand,
" Walk'd forth vindictive through a venal land:"
How Abdalominus, the Bard pursu'd,
With scornful smile the robes of Empire view'd.
Why then, recanting every generous strain,
Such as old Humber heard, but heard in vain,
When Gallia's genius, vilely compass'd round
With swarms of Despots, sore through many a wound,
By all forsaken, in convulsive pain
Burst from his nervous arms the galling chain,
Caught this exhausted Veteran the mean hate
Of those who toil'd to crush a rising state?

* Andrew Marvell. The Reader is entreated to compare Mr. Mason's " Ode to Independence," and the " Episode of Abdalominus in his Eng- " lish Garden," with the " Palinodia" he published after the French Revolution.

But from Vertumnus' and Pomona's bowers,
Twin'd with salubrious plants and brightest flowers,
Lo! Darwin comes; around his hoary head
Hath Liberty her verdant trophies spread:
'Twas his to turn from every gaudier theme,
"The painted mistress, or the purling stream,"
Atchievements yet untold their Poet claim,
His sounding harp records Columbia's fame,
Or France, like anger'd Sampson, when of yore
Rent from their hinges, Gaza's gates he bore.

With nought but Bourbon's glory Paris rung,
In a more manly tone till Corneille sung,
Recall'd his audience to a pristine age,
And rous'd by loftier sentiments the stage.
Born to rebuke the proud, the weak defend,
Of Calas' injur'd race the generous friend,
Voltaire succeeded; he in after-days
Reap'd the full harvest of unbounded praise;
Instruction dawn'd on those who idly sought
To waste the passing hour; e'en Courtiers caught
The spirit of his Brutus, and began
To feel the native energies of man;
Then hail'd the march of that victorious Dame
Fair Liberty, as down Morat she came *,

Her

* "La Liberté: j'ai vû cette Deesse altiere
"Avec Egalité dispensant tous les biens,
"Descendre

Her hands distain'd with gore of Charles the Brave
Laid low in dust, and many an Austrian slave:
'Gainst him an host of Bigots storm'd in vain,
And Power despotic clank'd her iron chain:
But ah! he sunk into the silent tomb,
While unexplor'd Futurity's deep gloom
Yet o'er his Country hung. What Muse of fire
Shall catch his mantle, with auspicious lyre
Hymning those warriors to whom Gallia owes
Her rescue from confederate swarms of foes?

Loud roar'd the blast, convulsions shook the sky,
Amazement saw no Guardian Angel nigh,
When the huge Danube (whose ferocious tribes,
Inur'd to havoc, thirsting after bribes,

"Descendre de Morat en habit de guerriere,
"Les Mains teintes du sang des fiers Autrichiens,
"Et de Charles le temeraire."

VOLTAIRE, Ed. de Beaumarchais, T. xiii. p. 173.

So little was their Poet's love of Freedom thought to have been transfused into the breasts of Frenchmen, that we find a British Laureat, one of Voltaire's contemporaries, expressing himself thus:

"The land of Freedom, with the land of Slaves,
"As Nature's friend, must wage eternal War." WHITEHEAD.

Reasons *equally strong* for setting no bound to hostilities undertaken from motives quite the reverse afterwards issued in a profusion hardly credible from the Press, the Pulpit, and the Senate.

Peace and her train of social Arts detest)
In noon-tide glare display'd his haughty crest,
And, masking vile designs with feign'd Alarms,
Rais'd his hoarse voice, and call'd the World to arms.

But its own bulk dissolves th' unwieldy mass;
Mephitic clouds exhale their stores, and pass;
Let Europe's sons, scarce rescued from dismay,
Welcome these omens of a happier day.
May pure Religion o'er the soul diffuse
Her healing balm, and point to nobler views,
Wrest from the Hypocrite Power's scorpion rod,
Assert the prostituted name of God,
And to that "Holy Mount *," where Aspics change
Their nature, where innoxious Lions range,
Greatest and best of miracles, convey
Reluctant Man, more cruel far than they.

To Tyrants, or their worthless minions, long
Have Nations pour'd the tributary song,
While bloated Malice, leagu'd with childish Zeal,
Is titled, ardor for the public weal:
Too long have wild Crusades, yon Statesman's dreams,
Fields drench'd in blood, and conquest's distant gleams,
Of many a venal Bard employ'd the pen:
'Tis time to rouse, think, speak, and act, like men.

* Isaiah, chap. III. ver. 9, and chap. LXV. ver. 25.

Crossing

Crossing the vast Atlantic deep, let Fame
High in her Temple fix that Chieftain's * name
Auspicious to his native land, while close
The gates of Janus, and the tribes repose:
Or on those dauntless sufferers Freedom's cause
Consign'd to chains, bestow deserv'd applause;
Him † who in Olmutz' cursed dungeon lay,
By Despots long secluded from the day,
Ere Austria's Eagle, of her plumage shorn,
Left ether's heights, and to the ground was borne;
Or Kosciüsko, in an evil hour
To Poland lost, while, with gigantic power,
The North's foul Harpy seiz'd her struggling prey;
Carnage then choak'd th' obstructed current's way;
Till Death, that great avenger, on her Throne
His banner fix'd, and claim'd her for his own.

* General Washington. † La Fayette.

FEBRUARY, 1798.

EPISTLES.

BOOK I.

LIFE.

EPISTLE I.

TO

CHARLES WATKINS MEYSEY, Esq.

.....

Notre vie n'est, pour ainsi dire, qu'un jour; faisons en sorte qu'elle soit unie & egale. DU HALDE.

.....

IN Contemplation's awful seat,
Guided by Wisdom's sovereign power,

Whether

Whether we fix our steady feet,
Or let them negligently stray
Thro' every maze and every bower,
Where lawless fancy points the way;
We still propose from either measure
Some present or some future pleasure.

Think'st thou that Folly's jovial crowd,
Who drown with wine the stings of Care,
A groupe intolerably loud,
Amid their nightly revels share
That unsophisticated bliss,
Which they who tread the thorny road
To Learning's sceptical abode
In vain researches doubly miss;
Or, girding on the Cynic fur,
When the gay bloom of youth is gone,
Would'st thou, like angry Solomon,
Worn with debaucheries aver,
The world is nought but vanity
From Zembla to the Torrid Zone:
Or by the Stoic race supplied
With scraps of philosophic pride,
In supercilious mood defy
Fate to increase, or render less,
Our fix'd degree of happiness,
Dependent on thyself alone?

Misled by appetite, or fear,
While others hurry to the board
Of Circé, too profusely stor'd,
Or Superstition's hermitage;
With us, who aim to steer between
The dissolute and the severe,
Enamour'd of the golden mean,
Calm Reason, in her modest strain
Oft whispers, how supremely vain
Ten thousand phantoms which engage
A Mortal's horror or delight,
Eager approach or shuddering flight.

In nice researches at their leisure,
To ask what most befits the Sage,
Station'd amidst a golden age,
Some transitory kind of pleasure
To More's Utopians might afford,
To such I mean whose brains are stor'd
With loftier images than ours:
Perfection's votaries, a race
Equivocal, I leave t' embrace
That phœnix thron'd on baseless towers,
Content with an inferior place.

But since the mingled thorns of strife,
And nightshade of adversity,
Are planted to embitter life:
Let us, my Friend, on Virtue's aid,

Whene'er the gathering tempest lours,
With dauntless constancy rely;
And visit that auspicious shade,
Ægeria's long forsaken grot,
Where erst, the trappings of a King
Awhile cast off, the limpid Spring
Suffic'd sage Numa, who forgot
All meaner cares, his generous soul
Exalting to the starry Pole:
Or cull each sweet from Fancy's bowers,
And, with a lover's tender hand,
Fostering the blossoms ere they die,
To this bleak soil transplant the flowers
Of elegant variety.

'Twas thus, in Albion's evil hour,
To mark the second Charles's reign,
As from a trance, despotic Power
Awakening, at the gaudy helm
Resum'd her station; o'er the realm
Corruption and her hydra train
Their unresisted influence spread;
Beneath the Tyrant's haughty wheels,
Deform'd with many a ghastly wound,
Lay vanquish'd Freedom, pale and bound:
From her forsaken altars fled
Afflicted Justice, with a nod
He shook their basis; at his heels

The hounds of Lust and Rapine trod.
Ev'n thus, superior to the wrongs
" Of evil days and evil tongues,"
Rising from Virtue's blasted shade,
Great Milton stemm'd with noble rage
The torrent of a barbarous age;
And at his close of life, when Time
Had damp'd the fire of Poesy,
Disease his mortal frame decay'd,
And darkness quench'd his visual ray,
His daring Genius, borne on high,
Beyond the galaxy sublime,
With Inspiration's stedfast eye
Beheld the cherub Innocence
Summon his parting spirit hence,
And ope the source of endless day.

Thus too, on Gallia's fostering plain
Where Wisdom wears her easiest mien,
Where chearfulness erects her fane,
And calm Philosophy is seen
Rarely to emulate the boast
Of those who hold, that suffering most
Produces greatest happiness;
To second Marlborough's arms, when Fate
The thirsty fiends of war unbound,
When Desolation stalk'd around,
And Vengeance thunder'd at the gate,

Beneath some grotto's cool recess
His lute voluptuous Chaulieu strung;
And from each martial scene retir'd,
La Farre, in artless minstrelsy,
Still by the rays of beauty fir'd,
Of letter'd ease blest votary, sung
The rural Sports, bewitching Loves,
The Smiles and Graces ever gay,
Inmates of St. Maur's happy groves,
Where Marne's meand'ring waters stray:
Tho' at these names, th' unfeeling Sage,
Who deems their levities a crime,
Assume the wrinkled look of rage,
The myrtles, which, to grace their tomb,
The fingers of Humanity
Have planted, shall for ages bloom,
Unsullied by the breath of Time.

Since thus, the Muse's lenient power,
By Virtue's friends, in every age,
Has been experienc'd to assuage
The frowns of dread Necessity,
Or Death's inevitable hour;
Ev'n I, the meanest of their train,
Too conscious by how slight a thread
The wasting loom of life is fed,
With fond intemperance to rely
On those delusions of the brain,

Which glitter in Ambition's ray:
From these obscure abodes, the seat
Of humble Mediocrity,
Where Fate has fix'd my calm retreat,
Feel little appetite to stray,
Attracted by that empty state,
Which gilds the mansions of the great
With what th' unmeaning World calls gay.

Much less, on Rigor's narrow cell,
With any pleasure can I gaze;
Or with mysterious Bigots dwell,
In gloomy thoughts, who pass their days,
Their nights, in dreams of wretchedness:
Disclaiming riotous excess,
Still were the tenets I embrac'd
Such as, at Nature's board, dispose
Each temperate chearful guest, to taste
The fare her generous hand bestows.

Beside some wanton stream reclin'd,
When first, in youth's romantic morn,
With inexperienc'd hand I twin'd
Some flowerets, gather'd from its brink,
To grace the Naiads, or adorn
Pan's festive shrine, when, free from pain,
Free from each serious occupation,
Left to myself, I rang'd at will

Thro' all the fields of inclination;
Such were my sentiments, and still
Unchang'd these sentiments remain.

Regardless what yon Sages think
Whose bosoms never knew to feel,
To thy decision I appeal,
Whether these flimsy strains can sink
Below didactics, trebly clad
In college buckram, such as Zeal
And monkish Ignorance applaud,
When grim Fanatics stalk abroad,
To preach themselves and hearers mad.

Should the relentless Fates ordain,
T' embitter Life's last lingering hours,
That Age, with Sorrow in his train,
Wither the Muses' laureat bowers;
Should stubborn Nature yet survive,
And that curst period e'er arrive
When Avarice, Envy, each a pest
More hot than hell, shall break my rest
With pangs no med'cine can appease;
And dark Mistrust, and jealous Care,
All, all the Dæmons of Despair,
Like vultures, rend my tortur'd breast;
In its first stage, ere the disease
Become inveterate, send, ye Powers,

And

And send it home, some friendly dart,
Like that which fled from Dian's bow
To pierce the Theban * Hunter's heart;
Belov'd of Heaven, amid the skies,
In full career, he still pursues
His favorite occupation; views
The rapid lynx with ardent eyes,
And shakes his spear, in act to throw.
O that when Death shall claim this load
Of frail mortality, on high
Thus may I soar, and in th' abode
Of tuneful elegance and mirth,
To a more perfect Life restor'd,
Possessing what I sought on earth,
At Love's or Friendship's genial board
Wake the shrill chords of harmony.

Meanwhile, persuaded that each Power,
Whose influence gilds the present hour,
Will on the next benignly smile,
In schemes of literary ease,
Designs that profit while they please,
The boisterous passions I beguile:
And if some transient cloud o'ercast
The prospect; those romantic days
O'er which young Fancy lov'd to throw
A coloring, to which the rays

* Orion.

That float on Iris' vivid bow
Must yield, indelibly imprest
On Memory's tablet, with new zest
Shall oft recur. —While thus the mind
Insatiate dwells upon the past,
Revolves those scenes which cannot last,
And longs to leave a trace behind
Ere yet Life's little day be o'er;
Forgive, if an ingenuous pride
Stile me, to worth like thine allied,
By kindred much, by Friendship more.

DEATH.

EPISTLE II.

TO THE

REVEREND THOMAS BLY, M. A.

RECTOR OF THENFORD, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE.

.....

Quicquid id est, sylvestre licet videatur acutis
Auribus, & *Nostro* tantum memorabile *Pago:*
Dum mea rusticitas, si non valet arte politâ
Carminis, at certè valeat *Pietate* probari.

CALPURNIUS SICULUS.

.....

YOUR estimation of the time
Mispent in haunting Pindus' wood
Or on the laurel'd Sisterhood
Intruding with perpetual rhime,
Full well I know; fair Reason's mien
You think distorted by the pranks
Of us poetic mountebanks,
And that, in Rhetoric's flowing stole,
Her charms to more advantage seen,
Make an impression on the soul,

Than when, by syllables and feet,
Stretch'd on Procrustes' iron bed,
To make the jingling couplets meet,
Attuning them with higher peg,
This rashly amputates a leg,
That, still more desperate, lops the head.

Mid pines coëval with the soil,
Whose grassy lap I lov'd to press,
When, after Childhood's playful toil,
In Fancy's arms I sunk to rest,
Behold yon cypress, o'er my tomb
By rustic hands with field-flowers drest,
As erst in Arcady the blest,
To cast its venerable shade;
And judge, my Friend, if this recess
Aught misbecomes the pensive Muse,
Who oft, at eve's impending gloom,
Thro' wilds where pilgrim rarely stray'd
Expatiating, sedately views
The transient glare of human pride,
Beauty and Valor's baseless trust,
By Fate soon level'd in the dust,
And realms of Hades drear and wide:
Conversing here with stones and stocks,
Far from Ambition's idle strife,
She her dread argument unlocks,
And sends this *counterpart of Life*

To

To you, who, midst the busy crowd
Of Churchmen, narrow-minded, proud,
Grasping at Mammon's dignities,
Eager in worth alone to rise,
Are somewhat more than orthodox.

" Allowing Bards their utmost scope,"
With some emotion you reply;
" Let not these vain intruders hope
" The King of Terrors to repell,
" Or make his blunted arrows fly,
" Aim'd at the youth who *rhimes so well*,
" With a less dread velocity.
" When Sherlock paints the struggling breath,
" The pallid corse, the mourner's woes,
" And all the attitudes of Death,
" 'Tis in the sober garb of prose,
" Without one tinsel ornament:
" Excluded from Neæra's door,
" If prompt to give affliction vent,
" Tibullus, while the wintry sleet
" And piercing blasts assail, deplore
" His sufferings through the midnight hour;
" Or Ovid, at Corinna's feet,
" In allegoric ditty feels
" The golden shafts, which Beauty steals
" From Vulcan's forge; the healing power
" Of modulated numbers sweet

" Beguiles

" Beguiles a drooping lover's pain,
" And quickly to his eager arms,
" Dear fugitives, in all their charms
" Brings peace and comfort back again;
" For themes like these alone, rely
" On thy *four-footed minstrelsy*.
" Why should Religion tread the stage
" Some mystic devotee to win,
" And compliment a trifling age,
" Array'd in coat of Harlequin?"

Alas, to judge from outward dress,
And thence distinguish as we ought
Between the worldling's emptiness,
Or Sage, with just ideas fraught
Of Death and Immortality,
Demands our utmost penetration;
With spurious piety, some hide
The qualms of disappointed pride,
While Coxcombs owe their dissipation
To nought but frozen apathy.

The Persian devotees, opprest
By Superstition's gloomy mists,
(All ages have their Methodists)
To strike the sinner with surprize,
Plac'd, we are told, before their guest
A human skull; at first, through fright,
All shrunk from the disgustful sight:

In time the veriest dastards, grown
Quite callous, while before their eyes
This vile memento daily stood,
With piety like gloomy Monk,
Oft as he meditates alone,
Hugging his crucifix of wood,
Were found most cynically drunk.

Far different Aristippus' schemes,
Preferring courts to rural streams,
Oft as benignant Fortune came,
O'erjoy'd her bounties to receive,
He welcom'd the capricious Dame;
When, to his ardent suit unkind,
She fled, nor left a trace behind,
He mingled not with those who grieve,
But liv'd, and laugh'd, and died the same.

Sure Wisdom privileg'd his birth,
Through shifting Life's ambiguous scene,
Who skilfully can steer between
Democritus' unfeeling mirth,
And Heraclitus' deep chagrin,
Collected in Death's aweful hour,
Whose sable banners, rear'd on high,
Summon him, with resistless power,
To meet th' award of destiny;
From human ties prepar'd to part,

In

In Virtue's philosophic bower
He bares his bosom to the storm,
Smiles at the Tyrant's lifted dart,
And meets his rage in any form.

Lo! at the grisly Monarch's call,
What shadowy forms of Beauty glide!
How fade the glittering wreaths of Pride,
How droops the falchion of the brave;
Each tongue conspires his might to tell;
Birth, fortune, titles, learning, all
In universal chorus swell
The conquests of th' unpitying grave.

Such conquests last not ever: — Hark!
A voice more shrill than Seraph's lyre!
Behold! more radiant than the fire
On Sinai's Mount, such floods of Day
As from Cimmerian mazes dark
Earth's wandering denizens recall:
Follow that light, whate'er befall
The worldly wise, it points the way
To Jordan's holy stream; o hear
These accents with attentive ear;
" From time's first origin display'd
" Above yon starry firmament,
" In equal balances are weigh'd
" Man's moral actions; — o beware,

" Nor

" Nor frustrate Mercy's mild intent;
" Mark what these adverse scales express,
" Here mount to Heaven the virtuous, there
" Sink the vile brood of wretchedness."

By sorrow or disease opprest,
A sovereign balsam for my wound
Still in those doctrines have I found,
Which, from the mansions of the blest,
Our great Redeemer, who to save
Millions of hopeless sinners died,
Proclaim'd, which, sought by human pride,
And daring sophisters in vain,
With unexhausted love he gave
To cheer the lowly hermit's cell:
How stole away the sense of pain,
Oft as these sacred Records tell
Of future bliss, or future woe,
Proportion'd to our deeds below.

Enough for me, I never trod
Among the sons of Cruelty,
Among the slaves who forge a lie,
Or miscreants who blaspheme their God:
Enough for me, life's little day
In unimportant projects spent,
Forbids to hope the Saint's reward,
Or fear the Villain's punishment:

Away,

Away, desponding thoughts, away!
Haply some gate of humbler bliss
Which gentle Mercy has not barr'd
Against a wretch who did amiss,
Yet err'd not through malignity,
May open to receive my soul;
Haply, beneath some milder sky,
Where no inclement fogs controll
The sun's blest rays, shall I prolong
Sage converse in ecstatic song
With those whom I regarded here,
As on our board the Muses smil'd,
Taught to relax the brow severe,
When I the fleeting hours beguil'd
With letter'd ease and decent mirth:
Or meeting you, my good old Friend,
Bid memory oft those scenes attend
Where we philosophiz'd on earth.

Yet, ere th' inevitable cave
Of Death his tottering feet receive,
Permit the vacant Bard to weave
This chaplet; where funereal bowers
Of yew their blasted foliage wave,
Mixing with careless hand the flowers
Of Arcady; him hovering near,
Wild Fancy fashions to her lure,
Whispering soft somethings in his ear,

As on the greenswerd idly stretch'd
(Worthless memorial) to his Friends,
In an ingenuous mood, he sends
This of himself rude portraiture,
With a fantastic pencil sketch'd.

Born with Ambition, to whose sway
Each meaner passion might have bow'd,
He follow'd a delusive ray,
And, eager in pursuit of fame,
Look'd high above the groveling crowd,
Till self-conviction pois'd the scale:
For, while his visionary claim
Nor eloquence, nor mental strength,
Nor vigorous health sustain'd, at length
Ev'n hope itself began to fail;
His guardless youth then fell a prey
To Fiction's necromantic charms;
Which, stripping Reason of her arms,
Beside the margin of some lake,
In meads where circling Fairies play,
Presented to his dazzled view,
Nature, by artful Poets shewn,
In specious colors not her own,
Tended by pleasures ever new,
With golden Mediocrity,
And all such pastoral foppery,

Till, strangely dreaming while awake,
He half believ'd th' illusion true.

When History, her instructive page,
Fraught with the spoils of many an age,
Unfolded; disinclin'd to gaze
On mighty Conquerors, who hurl'd
Destruction o'er a bleeding world,
Those objects of unhallow'd praise;
He saw a Phocion poor and old,
From Senate or from Camp retire
To his low hut and scanty fire,
Spurning the Macedonian gold;
To Cato's aweful genius bow'd,
And either Brutus, names on high
Enroll'd by Immortality,
Distinguish'd from the scepter'd crowd.

Among the virtuous and the wise,
On Emulation's wings to rise,
Oft laboring, laboring oft in vain,
A retrospect of better days
He cherish'd, from his earliest youth
Train'd to revere the shrine of Truth;
And frugal in dispensing praise,
Regardless of the laurels strewn
By Bards, a mercenary train,

Round

Round each abhorr'd despotic throne,
To Heroes, by the modish Great
Calumniated with ruthless hate,
For Freedom and their native land
Propitiatory victims, slain
On scaffolds or th' embattled plain;
Hambden, or Grevile, who withstood
Infatuated Charles's band,
Sydney, the dauntless and the good,
Or martyr'd Russell, wak'd the strain.

Patriots like these his soul approv'd:
Deaf to the sounding trump of Fame,
He sceptically sat unmov'd,
While moon-struck throngs, in loud acclaim,
Combin'd to rend the patient ear,
Echoed some venal Statesman's name;
Or Preacher trite, or Sonnetteer,
Stale Cynthia's matchless worth display'd,
In midnight routs, whose haggard face,
Distorted to a sour grimace,
Announc'd with sanctified parade
Her never-sullied chastity:
Nor from the sage Eusemnus' tomb,
Where marble Angels, perch'd on high,
Point to those reams of holy strife,
Whose study nurs'd his rancorous gloom,
The sad employment of his life,

Did he in pensive flegm return,
Or any useful moral learn.

In Epicurus' easy school,
Tho' oft with Crebillon he stray'd;
Or with Le Sage's motley crew,
Where Friendship, wont such wond'rous rule
To bear in Fancy's realms, display'd
In lively colors to his view
The crafty knave, or bubbled fool,
In her most specious garb array'd:
With undeliberating scorn
(Sworn to no sect) he still survey'd
A doctrine which he felt untrue,
And deem'd the wretch whose coward breast
Rankling with an eternal thorn,
Admits Suspicion's odious train,
Not undeservedly oppress'd,
By all that fell Alecto sends,
Of jilting Nymphs or treacherous Friends,
Who, pictur'd in his aching brain,
E'en when ideal broke his rest.

With failings compass'd round about,
More than enough to weary out
Your patience, if minutely told,
Some half-form'd Virtues, in his breast
A little tenement possess'd,

And

And still maintain'd their early hold,
No King more wedded to his throne:
The Muse his anxious hours beguil'd;
To many errors reconcil'd
In others, conscious of his own,
He calmly heard Death's shafts resound,
While near him came the frequent wound;
Assur'd, beneath the silent grave,
Midst tangled paths and worlds unknown,
That Mercy will descend and save.

[1767.]

THE

TEARS OF ASTROP.

EPISTLE III.

TO

MISS HARRIET BLOSSET.

.....

Gli angelici sembianti nati in cielo
Non si ponno celar sotto alcun velo. ARIOSTO.

.....

" CAN the blest swains of Astrop pine,
" When, crown'd with Amalthean horn,
" Such savory cates, such floods of wine,
" Such slaughter'd hecatombs of geese,
" This * chosen festival t' adorn,
" September, bounteous God, presents?
" Heavens! what unusual discontents
" O'ershade these antient realms of Peace!
" Pale Care sits thron'd on every brow;
" And they, who rarely thought till now,

* Michaelmass-day, annually commemorated at Astrop Wells, in Northamptonshire.

" Rival

" Rival with furrow'd look forlorn
" Each old Philosopher of Greece."

In these light strains exclaim'd some youth,
Yet uninstructed whence arose
The signs he view'd of deepest woes,
Curious to penetrate the truth.
All strove to answer; — silence hung
With leaden weight on every tongue,
And testified excess of grief.
Long had they paus'd; when from the Spring
Its Genius (whom, as Poets sing,
Hygeia sends to the relief
Of sickness) rising, thus express'd
The feelings that for utterance heav'd
In every sentimental breast;

" Young stranger, whosoe'er thou art,
" (For sure it ought to be believ'd,
" Since in my pangs thou bear'st no part,
" Far from my source, in some bleak wild,
" Where Wit and Beauty never smil'd,
" Thou drew'st thy natal breath) attend,
" And make our wretchedness thy own;
" Not that yon lowering clouds impend,
" Not that we view these groves bereav'd
" Of leafy honors, do we moan;
" But that from these neglected shades,

" Anticipating Winter's reign,
" Fair Harriet flies; who, midst the maids
" That haunt the margin of yon stream,
" Winding along my fertile plain,
" Shone with unrival'd elegance;
" She, of these tears the conscious theme,
" Flies, unrelenting as the wind,
" Nor casts one pitying glance behind,
" To bid these meads a last adieu:
" Hadst thou beheld that graceful ease
" With which she trod, in mazy dance,
" My fragrant vales, and woodbine bowers,
" Slighting applause, secure to please,
" When, votary of the rural Powers,
" She quitted Thames's banks, resign'd
" The studied ornaments of dress,
" And look'd, and was, a Shepherdess,
" Thou too hadst sympathiz'd with these,
" Whose smart excites thy gaiety.
" Whether to term such ignorance
" Of this transcendent Fair, mischance,
" Or bliss, I hesitate: beware,
" Nor with ill-omen'd step advance
" Too hastily, the cup to share
" Of dangerous Sensibility,
" That draught, to vulgar lips denied,
" Where in confusion blended lie
" Th' extremes of pleasure and of pain;

" Hence

" Hence all its baleful dregs to miss,
" Yet taste the quintessence of bliss,
" Heaven's favourites, few alone, attain.
" Love, in a slight degree, beguiles
" The storms of Life's precarious tide;
" But if, too far, its Siren smiles
" The guardless traveller bewitch,
" Headlong to rush into the snare,
" Urg'd on by Hope, beset with Care,
" Too late solicitous to fly,
" He feels it in its utmost pitch,
" Distraction all and agony."

He ended; and the bubbling fount
Clos'd o'er his venerable head,
First having bade me to recount
To the dank vales and lowly cot,
Where Fate assign'd my humble lot,
The truths he spoke, the tears he shed.

O, form'd to shine in every sphere!
How shall the Pastoral Muse presume
To wish ingloriously confin'd
A Nymph so fitted to adorn
The court and splendid drawing-room,
From an admiring nation's gaze,
From scenes, where in full radiance blaze
The beauties which express *that* mind,

And animate *those* features, here
Amid the pines, grotesque and rude,
O'ershadowing this deep solitude?
Yet sometimes deign to lay aside
These envied gaieties, nor scorn
To visit our forsaken rill.

Old legend tells, on Ida's hill,
With winged Hermes for their guide,
How, to the Phrygian Shepherd, erst,
In such precedence little vers'd,
Contending Goddesses applied,
And urging eagerly their suit,
Though with each boon of Heaven endued,
O'erjoy'd at the vicissitude,
Sought from his hand the golden fruit.
When you, like these, awhile forego
The surer triumphs of your eyes,
Thro' curiosity to know
If aught of antient taste remains
Among us simple Village Swains,
And from our verdict seek the prize;
Boldly with an applauding voice
Shall we the question solve, nor fear
Lest Envy the decision hear,
Or Age condemn too rash a choice:
Each snarling censor *we* defy,
Our honest judgment Truth ensures

Against

Against that idle calumny,
That, with a Venus' person caught,
Minerva's wit we little sought,
When either claim confirms it yours.

Alas, in such untutor'd plains,
Ill can these rustic fingers hold
A lyre, attemper'd to the strains
In which enchanting Chaulieu told
Of Turenne snatch'd from Victory's arms,
Of Bethune's wisdom, Bouillon's charms,
And Steinkerque's memorable day;
Indeed, like Orpheus' magic song
His drew no listening brutes along,
But in a gay and polish'd age,
Which Science lov'd to call'd her own,
When from the height of Louis' throne
She darted forth her broadest ray,
Beside the winding banks of Seine,
Where blooms Parisian elegance,
The blest Epicurean sage,
Superior to the frowns of Chance,
Tho' Time had silver'd o'er his head,
The myrtle groves, the trim parterres,
And fragrant jasmine walks between,
Attun'd his charming shell, while cares,
And the wan forms of sorrow fled,

Soothing his audience with the flames,
Of mighty Chiefs and courtly Dames.

How shall this hoarse and scrannel flute,
Regarded only by my flocks,
That listening browse yon thymy rocks,
To such high stop its ditties suit,
As Harriet's self may deign to hear?
All hopeless, I attempt to raise
Strains that could sooth your nicer ear,
And utter, in these Runic lays,
Accents uncouth, disgustful praise.

Tho' on my moldering cottage wall,
Perchance with momentary gleam,
Some Muse's kindlier influence fall;
On the glad augury, in vain,
My too aspiring soul relies;
To you while I present the strain,
Th' inexorable Power denies
Expressions worthy of my theme.

THE

OPTIMIST.

EPISTLE IV.

TO

ROBERT AUGUSTUS JOHNSON, Esq.

.....

Natura beatis
Omnibus esse dedit, si quis cognoverit uti. CLAUDIAN.

.....

RESOLV'D to snatch the present hour
Sacred to Chearfulness and You,
Tho' the dank atmosphere yet lour,
From trivial converse I retire,
And, seated by a blazing fire,
With distant admiration view,
What borrow'd attitudes express
The world and all its emptiness.

Lectur'd by those considerate Friends,
Whose vows are pour'd at Wisdom's shrine

More fervently than yours or mine,
From idly tracing up and down,
By the dim torch yon Cynic lends,
Each Folly that besets the Town,
Or haunts the Cottage, I desist,
And, duly weighing in my thought
Those maxims honest * Pangloss taught,
Commence an errant Optimist.

Let the worn Beau of Anna's reign
Repeat what pleas'd in days of yore,
And act the Lover at fourscore,
All tottering and convuls'd with pain.
Let cards (ordain'd to break the fence
Which kept insipid ugliness
Apart from beauty and from sense)
Intrude on Meditation's gloom,
Banish the Matron's sober dress,
In sordid hearts increase the rage
Of avarice, and make hoary age
Sink unregarded to the tomb.

Of old, as godly writers tell,
When her unwelcome looking-glass
Inform'd our antiquated Belle
The triumphs of her charms were o'er,
And every Lover fled the door,

* In Voltaire's Candide.

Conscious

Conscious how swift life's minutes pass,
She order'd up her gravest pinners,
Exchang'd brocade for decent furs,
And copied penitential sinners:
But now at Flavia's toilet, grac'd
With such refin'd display of taste
As might become her granddaughters,
Midst Naples washes and carmine,
Spadille, great potentate, is seen;
Regardless of Time's ebbing sand;
Each eve, this idol to appease,
She dashes from her palsied hand,
Unread, Devotion's fervent strain,
Penn'd by old * Jeremy, Romaine,
Or any greater Saint you please.

Meanwhile at Fortune's spacious table
I take whatever seat I find,
Accommodating still my mind
To feed as well as I am able,
Fond to persuade each grumbling guest,
The fare, which from her shaken urn
This Queen of sightless equity
Chances at any time to turn,
Is undeniably the best;
Haply your candor may incline
To bid me the faint notes prolong,

* Jeremy Taylor.

Since

Since scorning meanly to repine,
Tho' the coy Nymphs of Pindus' hill
Their much-requested aid deny,
Self-sooth'd, with accents harsh and shrill,
I breathe an unambitious song.

Could my invention soar on high
With yours, together would we rove,
And gleaning each neglected sweet
From that imaginary grove
Where Beauty and where Virtue meet,
With blooming myrtle, Gallia's pride,
Braid laurels from Ilissus' side,
And strew the wreath at Plato's feet;
Or tread Leucate's haughty brow,
Where, mov'd with energy divine,
In days of more heroic mold,
Hopeless, yet resolutely bold,
The Lover pour'd at Phœbus' shrine
A last irrevocable vow,
Nor fear'd to tempt the raging tide;
Thence, while the big tear down her cheek
Steals copiously, bid Nature speak,
And near the gulph where Sappho died,
Erect on cliffs expos'd and bare,
The sad memorials of Despair.

Such

Such were the themes your voice approv'd;
Nor should fastidious Fancy ask
A scope more large, a nobler task,
When, by each prejudice unmov'd,
She dares to snatch from vulgar hate,
From the fastidious Censor's scorn,
Actions irregularly great,
Or sentiments that might adorn
Lycéum's archives, ere, in dust,
With brutal shouts, an impious band
The turrets of Erectheus laid;
And where the Patriot's aweful bust
Had dignified the palmy shade,
The Turkish crescent flam'd.—To close
My baffled soul's aspiring views,
November comes with envious hand,
And on yon altar of the Muse
While kindred incense blazes, throws,
To quench it, his unwholesome dews.

Yet tho' unbrac'd, my torpid lyre
Denies to breathe one tuneful note,
Tho', in these leafless shades, the throat
Of Philomel, with all the quire
Of feather'd harmonists, is mute,
While his deep croak the Raven swells,
Borne thro' the lurid air, and tells

Impending

Impending tempests; you alone,
I ask no other aid, can suit
My spirits to some livelier tone:
Thrice welcome to our quiet door,
Melissa will with smiles attend
To greet her long-expected friend;
And haply, by a prosperous breeze
Wafted from the Venetian shore,
Fraught with each Muse's choicest store,
Will Gwyn * return; or He, whose soul
With letter'd elegance refin'd
Displays ingenuous freedom, join'd
With Aristippus' powers to please,
As the swift hours unheeded fly,
Mix with the circulating bowl
His unconstrain'd festivity.

While thus to our obscure recess
The social Pleasures wing their way
In calm tranquillity, I bless
These howling blasts and fleecy snows,
Inclement Winter's dread array,
And sooth each anxious thought to rest,
Convinc'd whate'er betides is best:
Since Friendship's stream unfrozen flows,

* The Rev. Mr. Gwyn, the Author's Tutor, and afterwards Principal of Brazen-nose College, Oxford, who died in 1770.

Unlike

Unlike the giddy throngs we find,
Whose wishes float with every wind,
I those amusements well can spare
With which tumultuous cities ring,
And much prefer this chilling air
To all the vaunted flowers of Spring.

[1767.]

RETIREMENT.

EPISTLE V.

TO

MISS MARY INGRAM.

.....

D'une charmante reverie
Subit deja l'aimable loi ;
Les bois, les vallons, les montagnes,
Toute la scene des campagnes
Prend une ame, & s'orne pour moi. GRESSET.

.....

To lofty cielings, fretted walls,
Where Verrio's happiest tints are shewn,
And the young Pleasures fix their throne,
Your light feet mark the festive way,
And as the dance, or choral song,
In its alternate series calls,
Oft mingling with the social throng
You triumph innocently gay :
The pictur'd scenes appear to breathe !
Where'er you tread, in wanton play

The smiling Graces ever nigh,
Glide swift thro' the fantastic maze,
Or hovering o'er delighted gaze,
And from the purple canopy
Strew many an amaranthine wreath,
While each month wears the garb of May.

Should my benumb'd and frozen rhime
Intrude amidst your dressing room,
And, borrowing from this misty clime
Some obsolete morality,
Over the toilet cast a gloom,
For you with patience to attend
Till the distasteful lecture end
Were somewhat more than Sisterly.

I come not as the modish Saint,
O'erfed with venison yesterday,
Who now on water-gruel faint
Exhorts his flock to starve and pray;
The readers of my motley page
With allegoric cant to win,
Likening the world to some vile inn,
Life to a doleful pilgrimage.

My verse in gentler measure flows,
It blasts no chaplet on your head;
Nor, while Delight her flowerets strews,

Grown a morose Philosopher,
To each refin'd sensation dead,
Shall I with impious tongue aver
The conquests which your steps attend
Are the same pictur'd fallacy
With double suns, resplendent showers,
Soft airs of music, myrtle bowers,
Which erst Urganda's magic aid
Bade on the dreary heath descend,
To comfort some fond Nymph betray'd,
While such a groupe of captive swains,
Hopeless as Iphis, on yon plains,
Can witness their reality.

Since you enquire, how (never miss'd
By these gay circles) I exist
In solitude, while falling leaves
Strew the brown earth, no conversation
Save owls, or bursting from on high,
Plaints of a clamorous rookery:
The Genius of my natal hour,
Tho' pensive oft, who rarely grieves,
From his dark haunt, yon ivied tower,
Whose bulwarks rent speak desolation,
At your command with pride descends,
The wrinkled front of care unbends,
And thus commences his narration:

Where scarce the barren field supplies
A stunted thorn, or blade of grass,
To an amus'd spectator's eyes
Behold the Painter's mimic art,
Selecting objects as they pass,
Bids a well-fancied landscape rise,
Tho' he from nature must not part,
Caught by each vague embellishment,
Yet sketching on the topmost rock
The browsing goat, those steeps between
Some hoary Sage with brows intent,
Or Shepherd piping to his flock,
He forms an interesting scene.

Thus, when, in Winter's dismal hour,
Bright Flora shuns these wasted plains,
Tho' not a violet remains,
And woodbines wither round the bower;
Station'd in this obscure retreat,
Where oft my sylvan altars blaze,
Unmindful of the falling sleet,
The noontide gloom of shortening days,
I summon Fancy's agile throng
Their deathless pages to unfold,
And in some wonderous legend old
Of imagery sublime and strong,
To carry me to those blest years,
Sooth'd by aërial music's sound,

Though Fawns and Satyrs gambol'd round,
When Virgins slept devoid of fears,
No pest approach'd the Fairy ground.

Over the hamlet's guileless race
The Virtues long preserv'd their reign,
Their banquets long did Temperance grace:
Till issuing, fraught with martial pride,
From conquer'd India, from the side
Of Ganges, by the slaves of gain
Yet unpolluted, Bacchus' car
Reach'd Araby's exulting plain;
And as unnumber'd tribes from far
Hasted to greet the victor God,
Now at th' ascent of Nisa's hill,
His harness'd tigers slack'd their speed,
Obedient to their master's will;
Mid thousands prostrate at his feet,
Hymning each great and generous deed;
Then vaulting from his trophied seat,
With conscious dignity he trod,
And rais'd his potent thyrsus high;
Adown the summit opening wide,
Gush'd the rich wine in purple tide;
All hail'd the present Deity.
Scarce had the crowds asswag'd their thirst
With copious draughts, in hour accurst,
When swift around the sacred mount

Distrust and Rage, and Horror ran,
Heeding no more the limpid fount,
Each quaff'd, till his disorder'd soul
Rued the dire beverage, new to man,
And frenzy mantled in the bowl.

The splendors which adorn a court
Are all, so limited my theme,
Excluded; simple rural sport
Admits not that ecstatic dream
Which Metastasio's scenes invite,
When the full Opera's pomp displays
All that can either sense delight,
To sooth the ear, or fix the sight;
Blest notes, which, in the wane of Time,
Fair Harmony, her evening rays
Diffusing, sweet enchantress, bore
From Tiber's realms, to Albion's shore,
Unchill'd by a severer clime.

Yet sure Dodona's vocal grove,
And every scion of those oaks
Fraught with the Oracles of Jove,
Which, sacred from the woodman's strokes,
Pour'd forth spontaneous melody,
Excell'd each modulated sound
On which the sons of Art rely;

Nor, were the tomb of Memnon found,
Impregnated by solar heat
With strains unutterably sweet,
Could all Giardini's prosperous skill
Smiting the chords with energy,
Or Zamparini's lengthen'd trill,
With music's antient efforts vie.

Gods, how the lessening palace shrinks!
How withers every wreath of pride!
When, glancing o'er the mossy brinks
Of limpid founts that murmuring glide,
The mental eye enraptur'd springs,
And reasserts an empire, wide
Beyond the reach of annalists;
From legends over-joy'd to trace
That era, when anointed Kings,
Retaining still the specious name
Of Shepherds, with that blameless race
Were deem'd essentially the same:
Nor from the pleasing search desists,
Till, mounted near Astrea's throne,
I call the golden age my own;
O'er tribes attach'd by filial awe,
Some chosen ruler of the land
Then exercis'd his mild command:
No clarion blew, unstain'd with gore

Neglected

Neglected lay the hostile lance;
Justice, by Heaven and Hell rever'd,
But in those days belov'd not fear'd,
Her falchion in its scabbard bore;
For Conscience was man's only law,
His canopy Heaven's wide expanse.

Like fond Ixion, when the charms
Of Juno, fraught with every grace,
Approach'd, till, seiz'd with eager arms,
A cloud eluded his embrace;
This vision's ivory gates to close,
To rend away delusion's mask,
I feel cold History interpose,
And half renounce th' unfinish'd task;
With raven-croak 'tis hers to tell,
That, buried deep in Minos' urn,
Such blessings never can return
While on this nether globe we dwell.

Let Wisdom chronicle the past,
On rapid pinions born aloof,
Fancy, out-stripping Eurus' blast,
Spite of the critic's harsh reproof,
Transports me to another world,
Midst modes of being yet untried:
Amaz'd I view the rapturous scene,

While,

While, to the banners of their Queen
Above man's trodden haunts unfurl'd,
Exulting denizens of air,
A thousand Elves and Fays repair:
By no conspicuous titles grac'd,
But, where the paths of bliss divide,
In some sequester'd valley plac'd,
A purer atmosphere I breathe
Among the just, tho' far beneath
The stedfast Patriot, or Divine;
And blest in Virgil's temp'rate clime,
No longer tempted to repine
At the swift flight of envious Time,
Converse with Bards of antient days
Still crown'd with never-fading bays,
Names that thro' Glory's temple ring;
Or meeting long-lost Friends, whose worth
I erst regretted, snatch'd from Earth,
Repose where planes and beeches twine
Their foliage o'er the crystal spring.

On proper seasons much depends;
When no engagements interfere,
The Muse, whose active finger blends
Chaplets that grac'd the Sabine field,
With those Loire's fragrant vallies yield,
Perhaps might sooth your candid ear: —

But

But every spell has lost its power;
For lo at their appointed hour
The punctual chairmen wait your call;
So, having skimm'd my pages o'er,
This last, more long than all before,
You bid them hasten to the ball.

TOLERATION.

EPISTLE VI.

TO

HENRY HOBHOUSE, Esq.

J'ai élevé ma voix en faveur des droits de l'humanité, & cependant je n'ai jamais excedé même les bornes de cette vertu. Je pense que Dieu n'est ni Presbyterien ni Lutherien, ni de la basse ni de la haute Eglise; Dieu est le pere de tous les hommes.

VOLTAIRE, Ed. Beaumarchais, T. 56, p. 499.

FIRM on its basis, thro' that age
Which Mother Church, in many a page
Applauding, calls it primitive,
Religion stood; each various mode
Of worship to Heaven's calm abode
The Proselyte benignly led:
What tho' our Zealots think to drive
Elijah's fiery car, and reach
That bourn more swiftly, since on high
Presumptuous Orthodoxy's head

Was rear'd, to give the nations law;
Th' Apostles, modest and sincere,
Confin'd within the narrow sphere
Of real Christianity,
In haughtier style forbore to preach,
Nor subjected by servile awe
Their converts, nor with Codes, and Creeds,
And Articles on Test-Acts pil'd,
The weak and ignorant beguil'd;
But slighting all parade of speech,
Enforc'd their system by their deeds.

Vested with dignities which brought
Great labor, small emolument,
In fact and common sense the same,
No matter for an empty name,
Bishop or Presbyter then sought
Meekly to obviate all dissent,
Nor force employ'd home truths to smother;
Believers, amicably pent
In the same sheep-fold, were content
To recognise each virtuous Brother;
Such harmony prevail'd not long;
Gold, among Priests of after-times,
Found worshippers, with gold, all crimes,
Pride, avarice, rapine, waxing strong,
The Church's veil asunder rent
By secret fraud and open wrong.

Polluted

Polluted with the recent gore
Of many a kinsman foully slain,
When the response of Pagan Seers,
Too blunt to sooth a tyrant's fears,
Consign'd the murderer to despair,
Pale Constantine his incense bore
To Christian altars, from the fane
Where frown'd the idols of his sire:
Portentous signs illum'd the air;
Virtue lay mute, Opinion spread
Her wavering plumage; coals of fire
Were hurl'd at each obnoxious head:
While Athanasius' frantic hand
Scatter'd damnation o'er the land,
Humanity recoil'd with dread;
To dictate, not to understand,
Midst haughty captious school-men bred,
With anger stung if question'd why,
Applauding Prelates join'd the cry.

Serene amid polemic rage,
Calixtus, venerable sage,
More wholesome counsels vainly gave;
Those miserable Saints, at strife
With every art that softens life,
Unpitied saw his hoary head
Descend with sorrow to the grave:
Scarce was he lodg'd among the dead,

Ere

Ere Persecution's giant arm
Planted her trophies o'er his dust,
And the dark monastery's vile swarm,
Sated with blood their holy lust.

But why to distant archives roam,
When History's melancholy page
From reign to reign, from age to age,
Abounds with equal guilt at home?

Pass we the term of Gothic night,
When he who rashly dar'd to think,
Standing on danger's utmost brink,
Was deem'd by each astonish'd wight
Some wizzard conversant with hell;
Nor a malignant charge to swell,
Tho' proofs unnumber'd are at hand,
Will I expatiate on the time
Of croziers grappling with the crown,
The Priests' supremacy, who durst,
Thro' cobweb laws, like hornets, burst,
Whence Becket's murder, Henry's crime,
John shuddering at the Papal frown;
Nor Mary's hated annals name,
Red with the sanguinary brand
Of foreign and domestic shame.

After Eliza's golden days,
The Thistle with each hostile Rose
Was amicably twin'd; t' inclose
A Stuart's favour'd brows, the crowns,
Too long divided, join'd their rays;
Peace smil'd from Heaven; till Zeal, who drowns
With clamorous trump the still small voice
Of Reason, her deep taint impress'd
On bigot Charles's haughty breast,
Exalting Laud, detested choice!
Vile herd of Babylon, a race
Of cassock'd slaves, with shameless face,
Echoed their Primate's stern command;
Ripe for an arbitrary deed,
The narrow boundary of the Tweed
O'erstriding, * Proselytes to gain;
This evil genius of the land
Now forg'd Episcopacy's chain,
And marshall'd its rapacious band:
They who, such foppery with disdain
Renouncing, o'er the holy fires,
The decent worship of their sires,
Lamented in too harsh a strain,

* The "compassing sea and land to make Proselytes" to the little narrow tenets of their own peculiar sect, has not been confined to Scribes and Pharisees or to the days of Laud. "Compell them to come in," is still a favorite text with malignants of the nineteenth century.

By

By Persecution's iron hand
Torn from the chearing beams of day
Immur'd in noisome dungeons lay,
Or to the howling wilderness,
(Their's was a salutary dread,)
From sacerdotal rancor fled
And from tribunals merciless,
Till Vengeance smote the mitred pride
Of him, who, in that aweful hour,
Idly solicitous to bring
Pardons from an accomplice King,
Beneath the Senate's judgment died,
Less griev'd to part with life than power.

Since ruin crush'd the Stuart name,
With all their boasts of right divine;
Lov'd by Nassau and Brunswick's line,
Rose Toleration's steady claim,
Tho' rooted enmity remain'd
Its poisonous after-crop * to yield;
Unless by civil laws controll'd,
E'en then had Bigotry obtain'd
New triumphs, taken stronger hold,
And banish'd Reason from the field;
The Hierarchy's imperious swarm
Burst forth in so condens'd a storm,

* At London in 1780; at Birmingham in 1791.

Till Truth, her adamantine shield
Extending o'er assaulted worth,
Fearless of their unholy rage,
Protected in that happy hour
When liberal views combin'd with power,
Mild Clarke, and Hoadly, generous Sage,
Whose clear persuasive voice defin'd
Christ's empire o'er the human mind,
Unlike the brittle thrones of earth.

O'er Convocations, silenc'd now,
(Oblivion, wrap them in thy shroud!)
Too harden'd with remorse to bow,
Desponding Persecutors mourn,
And half their crested pride is shorn
From Courts Ecclesiastical,
Where Prelates fearlessly avow'd
Their scorn of Statutes literal,
And in defiance of the throne,
Promulging pandects of their own,
Craftily led the fetter'd crowd.

Content to strike at humbler game,
Wounding no more the ear of Kings,
As erst, with unharmonious blame,
Measuring to David's harp the lays
Of dark conceit and fulsome praise,
Episcopacy imps her wings,

And though to stated limits bound,
Restless and arrogant of soul,
Attempts the distant Indian goal,
Big with triumphant hopes, around
Stretching her sway from pole to pole.
Yet, tho' a Sherlock's proud demands,
Or dastardly and lurking schemes
Of Secker, urge o'er subject lands
To realize their golden dreams;
May primitive Religion, plain,
And unsophisticated, bless
Remote America's domain;
To their own real interests true,
Ever may British hearts disdain
Plans which exalt the worthless few,
By plunging millions in distress.

The Muse, in sober vestment clad,
No longer, to Castalia's stream,
Or Berecynthian orgies mad,
Extends th' unprofitable theme.

See how, by wintry frosts, the bays
Uninjur'd, with spontaneous bloom
Rise to encircle * Ashley's tomb,
By Wisdom guided thro' the maze,
And by creative Genius fir'd,

* Earl of Shaftesbury; Author of the Characteristics.

His penetrating search acquir'd
Truths unexplor'd by vulgar eyes
Though clear as the meridian ray:
Him shall enlighten'd ages prize;
While Superstition's abject race,
The Church's and the Throne's disgrace,
With all their legion skulk away.

Through various obstacles, my Friend,
Still persevere, till thou ascend
Yon rock where Toleration's fane
Its venerable dome displays;
Let no malignant Zealot gaze:
Mild is the clime, the winds are still;
With decent grace on all around
The Goddess beams her heavenly smile;
In converse where the sloping ground
Drinks fragrance from the gentle rill,
Is many a Sage and Patriot found,
Whose labors rear'd the massive pile.

By narrow systems unconfin'd,
High soars th' enlarg'd and liberal mind.
Thy worth, thy firmness, early known,
Have merited; nor thou disdain
The Muse's tributary strain;
Rapt into old Utopian days,

Pursuing

Pursuing nought but honest fame,
While unsupported and alone
I enter a contested field,
And to the censor's mercy yield
These unpremeditated lays,
Conscious of an exalted aim.

[1771.]

PHILOSOPHY.

EPISTLE VII.

TO THE

REV. HENRY BATHURST, LL.B.

FELLOW OF NEW COLLEGE, OXFORD.

.....

Καταπεσουσα η ψυχη εις τον θορυβον νηχεσθαι δυσεκνευστον πελαγος· εις' αν αυτη φιλοσοφια υποδεξηται, υποβαλουσα τας εαυτης λογισμους, ωσπερ το κρηδεμνον τω Οδυσσει η Λευκοθεα.

MAXIMUS TYRIUS.

.....

OFT as I drank the heavenly sounds,
Near Peneus ever fond to stray,
I proudly sought the lyric bay
Where most it flourish'd, in the bounds
Of Lesbos, and the myrtle groves,
Echoing the plaint of Sappho's loves,
Or wav'd its foliage o'er the bowl
That warm'd Anacreon's frozen age,

Or

Or form'd a wreath for Pindar's brow,
When, from Olympia's fam'd alcoves,
He urg'd with emulative rage
Aspiring Theron's fondest vow,
Till his swift steeds surpass'd the goal.

May happier Bards the laurel gain;
Be Wisdom's plantain branch my prize;
In even numbers this cold strain
Wafts no Europa o'er the main,
Nor counts Barine's perfidies.
While thus I seek her solemn fane,
Quitting light Mirth's capricious train,
Nor aim to please th' illiberal throng;
Let not Philosophy refuse
To animate my groveling song,
And raise to noblest aims my views.

Th' historic Muse's ample field,
Amidst whose paths, by time conceal'd,
With happier search your feet have trod,
To you distinctly has reveal'd
Each antient Sage and Demi-god,
With whom, in equal balance weigh'd,
Julians and Scipios of our days,
(Shame on the panegyrist's trade,)
Light as the dust their chariots raise,

Are wafted to Oblivion's sphere:
Pacific Numa's holy shade
I need not court you to revere,
Nor will my Friend too lightly deem
Of groves, where oft, absorb'd in thought,
From empire's frivolous parade
Escaping, Antoninus taught
That Life is but an empty dream.

Xenocrates' resistless tongue
Exemplified the force of truth,
While Athens with applauses rung,
In lessons to each virtuous youth,
Who from his master's conduct knew
What to decline, or what pursue;
Till Polemon, in wanton mood,
Just had he drain'd the festive bowl,
By wine embolden'd to intrude,
An unexpected scorner came;
Soon the relenting boy turn'd pale,
Felt his impetuous spirits fail,
The roses from his hair unbound,
Their faded colors view'd with shame,
And strew'd his chaplet on the ground,
As reason gain'd his better soul.

With cities * a terrific void,
Lyceum's venerable shades,
Haunts of the chaste Pierian maids,
With porticos extending wide,
With fanes that grac'd Ilissus' side,
Was mild Philosophy destroy'd?
Not thus: abandon'd by the Great,
O'er each inhospitable clime,
To all the ravages of time
Superior, she maintains her state;
Ev'n here erected stands her throne;
In Locke, a Plato of our own
We recognize: but who shall dare,
Like Plutarch, either Sage's fate
With strict precision to compare?
Skreen'd by the Tyrant's fostering hand,
The Grecian, in a distant state
Where Denis held supreme command,
His unmolested systems plann'd,
While, tempted to remove the yoke,
Oppression paus'd in her career,
And Slaves grew Patriots as he spoke.
Oh how revers'd the picture here!

* The havoc which Philip of Macedon made at Athens is thus described by Livy: Lyceum et quicquid sancti amœnive circa urbem erat, incensum est, dirutaque non tecta solum, sed etiam sepulchra. L. 31, c. 24.

On him of Freedom's vaunted land,
Our Oxford (so ordain'd the Powers,
Not those of Heaven, but Charles's train
Of abject gownmen dull and vain,)
Infix'd an arbitrary brand,
And drove this exile from her bowers:
His statue no inscription needs,
'Twas mercifully plac'd on high,
To warn each Academic youth
That dangerous is the road of Truth,
And Wisdom to perdition leads:
While, ere this vital spirit fly,
Rewards, more priz'd than marble, grace
Tame Flattery, and that groveling race
Who forge or propagate a lye.

Behold the wrecks of Bacon's pride;
Censur'd, degraded, and forlorn,
At length he scap'd the boisterous tide,
And in sure havens refuge found,
While to Ambition's rankling wound
Philosophy applied the balm,
And tells to ages yet unborn,
How far th' unsullied evening's calm
Excell'd the radiance of his morn.

In Speculation's lofty tower,
The chosen few maintain their seat,

And if malignant Fortune lour,
Born to defy the gathering storm,
With smiles her utmost fury meet,
Can face Destruction's horrid form,
And trample on the chains of Fear;
Such heights I ask not, yet revere
Those spirits of etherial fire.
But o, ye Muses, whose retreat
Full oft allur'd my devious feet,
Say, did I come a thankless guest,
Beneath your shade to vent my pains,
And weary your indignant choir
With doleful elegiac strains?
For me the lucid fount stream'd by,
I breath'd no curses on its tide,
My beeches spread their vernal pride
With love-lorn ditties unimprest,
Nor labor'd Echo with a sigh.

One while I view'd, in Ovid's page,
Rivers of milk and nectar flow,
Foretasting Paradise below,
Or, shuddering o'er Lycaon's feast,
Bewail'd the dire effects of rage,
The man transform'd into the beast;
Then, led by that Humanity
Whose just renown shall never die,
On which his Muse erects a claim,

Approv'd

Approv'd of every feeling heart,
Above the Critic's peevish blame;
Transplanted from a virtuous age
These lessons of the Samian sage;
" Unholy worshippers depart;
" Celestial eyes abhor the deed,
" Averted if the heifer bleed;
" Remote from murder, guilt, and fear,
" In vegetable banquets join,
" And consecrate a purer shrine,
" With songs that Heaven might stoop to hear."
Thus, following Sulmo's gentle Bard,
Whom sweet Variety attends,
Wisdom by all the Graces drest,
With milder influence sways the breast:
But ah! when, plung'd in Geta's snows,
On life's last verge, his Genius bends
Beneath accumulated woes;
Exil'd, deserted and forlorn:
(So mean Octavius could reward
The Poet who emblaz'd his fame)
With tears of sympathising shame
Such doleful narrative we read;
And scarce that lyre escapes our scorn,
Which fail'd him in his greatest need.

'Tis something to behold unmov'd,
How fares Ambition's desperate game;

To-

To-day, the Patriot stands approv'd,
Remorseless Fiends, to-morrow, tear
The cancel'd records of his fame,
Scattering his trophies in the air;
While on the bays of Pindus' mount
Refreshing Zephyrs ever breathe,
No torrent stains the crystal fount,
Nor dares stern Winter's nipping frost
Despoil the flowery meads beneath:
Tho' Milton's trumpet loud and clear
Oft vibrate on the raptur'd ear,
Gentler accompaniments sound;
Nor is the lute of Waller lost,
In his superior magic drown'd.
Favorite of Genius and Renown,
The daring youth, by Heaven inspir'd,
With noblest emulation fir'd,
Undaunted leaps th' obstructing mound,
Alone ascends the slippery hill,
And snatches an unfading crown;
Yet think not his success alarms
The Swain beside yon purling rill;
No envious fears his breast assail,
Studious of Nature's modest charms,
Who gathers pansies in the dale.

If he with crafty Statesmen vies,
Or hopes to thrive amid the toils

By which more gradual fortunes rise,
The baffled Poet oft recoils
Finding his utmost efforts vain:
But let not Arrogance despise;
The Muse who blest his natal hour
Atones for all: while round him sport
The shadowy forms of Fancy's train,
Each harmless pleasure can he court,
And feel its momentary power;
The various characters earth holds
Conspicuous forth to view, beguile
His years unheeded as they flow;
With mild emotions he beholds
Follies which merit Bruyere's smile,
But not the frowns of Rochefoucault.

Full many are the paths which lead
Thro' Life's perplexing wilderness;
The creeping bramble, noisome weed,
Here darken an uncultur'd scene;
There Flora, in her brightest dress,
Sheds fragrance o'er the painted green:
All have their tastes; — yon Pilgrim's state
To me, I own, appears more blest,
Than his who guides the stubborn shoot,
Ordain'd to clear each lurking pest,
And watch, like Argus, o'er the fruit:
In friendless wilds, alone and late,

The one, oft harrass'd, sinks to rest;
But when Hyperion's glittering beams
Again the face of Heaven adorn,
Exulting he salutes the morn,
And chearfully pursues his way
O'er rugged hills and shelving dales;
Now on the banks of chrystal streams
In meditation see him stray,
Or underneath the cedar's gloom,
Where every Zephyr wafts perfume,
Sit to receive the noon-tide gales,
And pluck the rose's fragrant spray:
The other heeds no cheering songs
When Philomel her notes prolongs;
For him the useless branches bend
Beneath Pomona's gifts, the plain
Is deck'd with asphodel in vain:
These beauties how shall he attend;
His thoughts engross'd with other task,
Anxious lest henbane's deadly seed
From yonder brake should taint the mead,
Or the destructive adder bask
Beneath the sun's meridian ray?

Thus free from shackles may I rove
Thro' Wisdom's consecrated grove
An humble, not unwelcome guest:
To fasten on mankind the load

Of some opinionative code
Were a presumption I detest.
Yet o what ecstasy to blend
The fruits of Science with each flower
That decks the Muses' laureat bower,
Still to their raptur'd votary dear:
In my conciliating song,
May Epicurus be more strong,
And Zeno's doctrines less severe;
For trifling forms let Zeal contend,
Remote from her infuriate throng,
While to benign Instruction's tongue
I listen with attentive ear.

[1772.]

INCON-

INCONSISTENCY.

EPISTLE VIII.

TO

RICHARD MOLAND, Esq.

Quod petiit, spernit; repetit quod nuper omisit;
Æstuat, ac vitæ disconvenit ordine toto. HORACE.

Slightly acquainted with a race
Term'd Allegoric Beings, long
Half idolis'd in empty song,
My brain I oft perplex to trace
The source whence Inconsistency,
That very soul of History,
Adorning with unrival'd praise
Those changeful words, that stedfast face,
The modern Orator displays,
Deduces her illustrious birth;
But find it labor nothing worth:
Whether like Venus, from the main,

In beauteous pride she first arose;
Or from an atmosphere, whence snows,
And heavy mists and drizzling rain,
Our spleen-struck islanders involve,
Descended to mankind a pest,
Clad in some wizzard's tatter'd vest,
The Muse yet hesitates to solve.

When Saxon, Norman, Pict, and Dane,
Alternately our Albion tore,
Till all its champains stream'd with gore,
The Goddess but commenc'd her reign:
Fresh discord mark'd succeeding years,
Usurping Kings and haughty Peers;
Each Rose with momentary pride
Expanded oft its rival hue,
Earth from her inmost bosom sigh'd
Such scenes of ruthless hate to view.

Under the boisterous Tudor line
Short were the intervals of peace:
Turn'd a polemical Divine,
Henry, forbidding strife to cease,
New modell'd faith; (her best blood spilt,
While Taxes, leagu'd with Famine, reign
O'er every desolated plain,
Europe, in future days, will own
That Sovereigns oft are worse employ'd:)

Priestly

Priestly encroachments to withstand,
When he his potent scepter rear'd,
Rome shrunk astounded; from the land
Copes, Cowls, and Crosiers disappear'd;
Now would I pause, or touch the string
To celebrate one Patriot King,
Had not his jealous rage destroy'd
The matchless bloom of Bolleyn's charms,
And, circling his imperious throne
With racks and dungeons, forg'd those arms,
With which his Bigot Daughter's zeal,
By Prelates merciless misled,
To every human feeling dead,
Tortur'd the groaning common-weal.

Let him who barters much for fame,
Nor reckons its precarious date,
Learn from the view of Cromwell's fate,
How changeable the mightiest name;
Torn like a cedar from its base,
In glory's mid career he fell;
His sad funereal pomp to grace,
Each Poet struck the chorded shell,
His Country's Genius o'er his bier
Shed many an unavailing tear;
Ere long a strange reverse ensued,
The grave was ransack'd for his dust;

With triumph abject spirits view'd
So foul a scene; South wreak'd his ire
In Sermons farcical and quaint,
Gauden became a mitred Saint,
And Clarendon denounc'd "Hell-fire;"
Awhile his tarnish'd honors seem'd
Plung'd in the deepest shades of night:
Daring at length to judge aright,
Posterity hath well redeem'd
The Hero's memory; Albion stands
Applauding with uplifted hands,
And proudly consecrates the bust
Of him, who, uniformly brave,
Weathering the storms of arduous times,
With many virtues, fewest crimes,
Retain'd the spoils which Fortune gave.

Domestic wars were heard no more;
And Albion, blest with gentler reigns,
Experienc'd thro' her festive plains
Riches and peace, unknown before:
Our Politicians, thankless race,
Who, rather than in quiet doze,
Would ransack ev'n the moon for foes,
And all their earthly transports place
In real or imagin'd woes.
In Faulkland's isle saw golden mines,

For * Corsica's bleak mountains rav'd,
And war with all its horrors brav'd
On questions foreign to this realm
As broils of Guelphs and Ghibelines:
But wiser counsels steer'd the helm.

The Senate ceases to require
Our Statesmen; like Dictators old,
Each Cincinnatus now retires
From scenes more splendid, to behold
The rustic Lares of his Sires;
This turnpikes, that canals designs,
And intersects his neighbor's plains
With Brindley's navigable lines;
He, whose superior elegance
Despises wharfs and broad-wheel'd wains,
Forms grand *improvements*; o'er yon vale
Conducts the stagnant lake's expanse,
With deadlier damps to taint the air,
Or, open to the northern gale,
Erects alcoves on summits bare;

* The Crown of Corsica, since won and lost, "versu dicere non est." On attempting to bring this sketch of John Bull's frantic behaviour from 1772 down to the fourth year of the nineteenth century, "Bis cecidere "manus." In autumn 1801, after nine years of war and two of dearth, John exhibited momentary symptoms of restored sanity. Some additions have been made; but the paragraph on the late prohibition of Venice Preserved is the only anachronism.

Meanwhile, with equal judgment plac'd,
His new-built mansion stands sublime;
Within, the vast saloon appears,
By many a marble statue grac'd,
And many an oozing column near;
For on Vitruvius' plans he rears
Stupendous edifices here;
The decorations all are chaste;
He freezes thro' Italian taste,
Proud tenant of a shivering clime.

Of three Professions, Science long
Hath sanction'd; a slight sketch we draw,
Assembling in our motley song
Physic, Divinity, and Law.

Making Religion a mere trade,
Left to the hungry Curate's care,
In purple and in lawn array'd,
Replete each day with sumptuous fare,
Some Prelates think it clearly shewn,
That *Dives wanted faith alone*;
Convinc'd that through the needle's eye
A rich man, camel-like, may pass
His bloated paunch, his front of brass,
Th' astonish'd world to edify.
Can doctrines such as these find room
To poison one ingenuous breast?

Tho'

Tho' Sherlock's spirit burst that tomb
Where Arrogance and Meanness rest;
Tax me with prejudice or whim,
By Heaven I would not credit him.

Assaulted by the sophistry
Of Gibbon, Bolingbroke, or Hume,
" 'Gainst all those wretches who presume
" Clear Revelation to deny,
" The Faith," exclaim our mitred Sages,
" On its own basis may rely:
" Let Romish Priests, of truth afraid,
" Call racks and dungeons to their aid;
" We pity man devoid of grace."
But if in Annet's vapid pages
Compos'd to earn a scanty meal,
Such infidelity they trace,
Vengeance o'ertakes his whitening hairs,
The vengeance of exuberant zeal;
Poor, and of humble birth, he found
An Author treads on slippery ground,
Beneath the pinions of the great
Unshelter'd, if he rashly dares
To probe the sores of Church or State.

While scorn and penalties requite
Those who to England's stablish'd rite
Conform not; step but cross the Tweed:

E'en from that Kirk, which, uncontroll'd
By Tyrants, Knox with vigorous hand,
In Truth's great interests rapid, bold,
Firm Patriarch of his native land,
Built on a rock, a priestly train,
Goaded by vanity or need,
Migrate in quest of wealthier stalls;
'Gainst Schism the pulpit rings in vain,
Exhorting not to quit the fold,
Yon Proselyte more loudly bawls,
Flush'd with high rank, and solid gold.

Since Æsculapius' learned dust
Repos'd midst serpents twining round
That Sage's medicínal bust,
Almost as many various modes
In Physic as in dress are found,
From boiling hot to icy cold,
Each various panacea loads
Th' enfeebled stomach with its weight;
If Patients, through despair grown bold,
Some young practitioner o'erawe
By bluntly quoting what we read
In Galen, Celsus, Sydenham, Mead,
" Nous avons changé tout cela :"
That inference, with such wisdom fraught
As Moliere's Woodman-Doctor taught,
Finally closes the debate.

Exploring reams of British Laws,
More desultory far and wild
Than those on which e'en Cynics smil'd,
His Bridlegoose when Rabelais drew,
In ermin'd state, each knotty cause
Deciding by th' impartial dice,
(What more could Rhadamanthus do?)
The Pleader sees his Client's gate
Beset with famine, tho' full long
Beneath intolerable wrong
The helpless wretch hath groan'd; "Such price,"
He moſt sagaciously observes,
"We pay for Freedom, in a State
"Where generous Independence nerves
"The meanest arm, and scope accords,
"For Peasants to contend with Lords,
"Can any price be deem'd too great?"

Keen to reproach our Grandsire's age
That heard the starving Otway's groan,
Say shall we dare to turn the page,
And look complacent on our own?
His Belvidera still possess'd
Dominion o'er the feeling breast:
But now the leaden mace of power
Expels her from the Public Stage.
Are venal Senates holy things?

Was this their planetary hour?
Could Bards two centuries ago
Imperial Parliaments foreknow,
Or Venice ape the War of Kings?
To Prophets whom his Fathers slew,
Rais'd not to hypocritic Jew
A sumptuous Tomb? More void of grace
We o'er the manes of the dead
Without remorse our venom shed,
And their best Monuments efface.

But why so arrogant a strain,
As if among that chosen race
Whom Inconsistency's mad train
Courted, but never could detain,
I challeng'd a conspicuous place?
Ev'n now her torch my bosom fires,
She woos me to her haunts again,
Her slight Pagoda's glittering spires,
Her shrines, her victims, are in view —
The Muse here interrupts my dream,
And from so perilous a theme
Recalls the verse inscrib'd to you.

Plac'd on the verge of busier scenes,
Be still the same, with firmness tread,
The end ennobled by the means.

In each pursuit while numbers fall,
T' increase his triumph who succeeds,
The man by calm experience led,
Who draws comparisons from all,
Will find, thro' Pleasure's wiles decoy'd,
Thousands by Levity destroy'd,
For one whom Ignorance misleads.

[1772.]

EPISTLES.

BOOK II.

EPISTLE I.

TO

JOHN CLEAVER, M.A.

STUDENT OF CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD.

.....

Muse,
Un usage inconstant t' entraine
Et la Raison toujours certaine
Ne t'a point marqué tes sentiers?
Mais, non, je ne veux point le croire;
Ce reproche offense ta gloire;
Et fletriroit tous nos lauriers. LA MOTTE.

.....

WHILE you, on Thames's banks, their favor'd plain,
Invoke the Muses in a happier strain,

Or

Or nobly point, to guide the rising youth,
The steep ascent which scales the hill of Truth;
With Learning pure Morality impart,
Strengthen the head, and humanize the heart;
Shall fond Presumption daringly intrude,
To grate your polish'd ear with accents rude?
Accept this offering like a partial friend:
Else the rash trifle justly might offend.

If e'er my bosom caught the sacred fire,
Let me with pride relate who strung the lyre.
Can I forget, while Memory holds her reign,
And summons forth her bright etherial train,
Beneath what * auspices my earlier age
Imbib'd the dictates of the good and sage?
No, gentle Ouse! for oft I lov'd to stray
Where thy smooth current winds its sedgy way:
If aught of honor verse like mine can give,
Thy name recorded by the Muse shall live;
Far dearer than Lyceum's grove, the theme
Of songs unnumber'd, or Ilissus' stream;
Although no sculptur'd urn thy source proclaim,
Thy meads no Bard transmit to lasting fame,
No lover carve thy praise on every tree
With his Calista fondly joining thee.

* At the Rev. Mr. Cleaver's, father of the gentleman to whom this epistle is addressed.

By Glory prompted, since I turn'd my eyes
To where the hills of steep Parnassus rise;
Since, sketch'd by Hope, the flattering landscape grew,
Ere Judgment check'd the strokes which Fancy drew;
Blindly I ventur'd midst the Aonian choir,
Nor fear'd to strike an unharmonious lyre;
But when, faint glimmering o'er some arduous theme,
The lamp of genius vanish'd like a dream,
In Wisdom's loftier spheres too weak to rise,
Where wrapt in clouds abstruser Science lies;
A stranger to the language of the schools,
And little vers'd in mathematic rules,
With ardent curiosity I sought
What modern Art, what antient Nature, taught;
And in those shades which the propitious Muse
No more refreshes with Castalian dews,
Saw barren Taste expand a leafy shoot,
To hide each sapless trunk, and wasted root.

Some will object; "Researches so misplac'd
"Pursue not; what hast thou to do with Taste?
"She dwells in courtly haunts with roses strew'd,
"Nor deigns to visit thy recluse abode."

"Avaunt ye witlings," the grave Pedant cries;
"Or pay just deference to the learn'd and wise.
"Whoe'er would judge aright of books, of men,
"And deal instruction with unerring pen,

" Before he hopes to win the gazing crowd,
" And to the world proclaim his thoughts aloud:
" Let him, in antient volumes deeply read,
" Drink genuine knowledge from the fountain head."

As one bewilder'd in profoundest night,
Who faintly kens some vapor's *dancing light*,
At random led; perplex'd by each remark,
We're left as much as ever in the dark,
When commentators solve the knotty point,
And twist contested adverbs out of joint.

Perhaps you'll answer, " that to clear the doubt,
" 'Tis best to search a stated medium out:
" Nor Fops nor Book-worms for our Judges call;
" These think too much; those never think at all."

To gold or empty rank shall we confine
The Muses' boon, the laureat wreath divine,
Extol the flimsy verse his Lordship weaves,
And worship every Priest who wears Lawn-sleeves;
Or, with an ardent spirit for our guide,
Extend the limits of Parnassus wide,
Demolishing all fences, and invite
The most illiterate mountaineer to write?

Whether we visit, dress, or entertain,
Custom despotic reigns;—and let her reign.

But

But shall the Muses from each modish ape
Learn to assume some new fantastic shape,
While the indignant Censor's tongue is mute,
O'erborne by numbers in the loud dispute?

He who attains the nice discerner's art
Feels with a tender sympathizing heart;
Nor by the test of cold prosaic laws
Defrauds Invention of its just applause:
But where expressive Nature's form appears,
Transported shudders at fictitious fears;
Now pale with grief, and now with joy elate,
Bleeds with the vanquish'd, triumphs with the great,
Each keen sensation, with alternate claim,
Exerts an empire o'er his thrilling frame;
This, this is he whose vigorous efforts climb
Up with the Poet to the true sublime;
Without Longinus' aid his soul it warms,
He wants no Burke to tell why Beauty charms.

Thus the great Stagirite, who taught the road
Thro' Learning's paths to Glory's high abode,
Himself before, with animated skill,
Dipp'd in Castalian streams his glowing quill,
Nor by dim cloister'd Observation saw;
But, ere enacted, he perform'd the law;
To Virtue's altar his bold Pæans reach,
And emulate the art, he strove to teach:

His tribute first the smiling Muse approv'd,
Then gave her scepter to the son she lov'd.

Fashion, sole arbiter of earthly things,
Exalting beggars, or deposing kings,
At length ordains (which none must disallow)
That what was Reason once, is Folly now.

See Criticism advance, inspiring awe;
She stalks triumphant, like some grand Bashaw:
With or without a cause, from systems free,
Alters, confirms, reverses her decree;
Fast by her car in iron shackles bound,
Reluctant Genius kneels, and licks the ground.

Think not I venture to dispute the chair
With those, who sit like Aristarchus there.
Less sanguine thoughts my sober wishes bound,
To tread secure, nor meet the threaten'd wound;
For this once more my trembling pen I draw,
And hail all Critics with respectful awe:

My lifted mirror hastens to display
The modern Poet issuing to the day:
I ask not, whom; what theme his Genius fires;
How sweet the strains his favorite Muse inspires;
Whether he pace on strait-curb'd classic steed,
Or mount the winged Pegasean breed?

I would not tear him with a Vandal's hate;
Nor yet, regarding his preposterous fate,
His sufferings wail, and curse his ruling star;
But calmly mention what those sufferings are.

In private sooth'd with more than friendly praise,
Incessant shower'd to feed his thirsting lays;
Hot with impatience, which his looks confess,
The youth commits his writings to the press:
On Dryden's sounding pinions see him rise,
Or range with Milton in ideal skies;
Eager he pants to reach the laurel crown,
Anticipating years of long renown.

Full soon he views the airy fiction past,
Such wild deliriums were not made to last.
Ere yet too late, mistaken Bard, retire,
Cease thy vain dreams, nor fan the hopeless fire;
Or if thy patient Muse must needs design
To heap with incense Glory's crowded shrine,
An ordeal more severe than that of old
Expect: — nay shrink not; — but approach, behold!
See Apes of taste with peevish Wits combine,
Weigh word by word, and murder line by line;
Here pining Envy frets, there Malice storms,
And Dulness rises in her thousand forms.

To scape the tempest's rage, we look around,
Rejoic'd if but a hovel can be found.
A man no cowardly poltroon I hold,
Who, wrapt in flannel, shuns Norwegian cold.
Then let us, as calm Prudence bids, obey,
And by her guidance take the surer way:
For since nor Heaven-taught Genius can avail,
Nor dint of study turn the loaded scale;
How shall a puny Rhimer dare withstand
Incens'd Stupidity's united band?

When Cæsar's legions, o'er Philippi's plain,
Midst trampled shields and helms of Patriots slain,
Pour'd down resistless as a mighty flood,
And Brutus shed the last of Roman blood,
With either party, Atticus, allied,
Bow'd to the triumphs of Octavius' pride;
Formally wept at Freedom's closing grave,
Then hugg'd his fetters like an abject slave.

My verse to thee submissive I resign;
Yes, mighty Dulness, I am wholly thine:
O teach me how to gain, — not merit, Praise,
And give, o give thy soporific bays:
Bind me a willing captive in thy chains,
And lead me where Alliteration reigns:
Hard by thy throne she waves her wonderous wand,
Wafting her balmy blessings o'er the land,

Where

Where warbling winds the pure pellucid rill,
And soothing sounds exploded meaning kill.

Sick of this homage, I depart in haste;
The labour'd sameness palls my jaded taste.
Fretful I mutter; "This is far too much —
"I hate e'en honor, should the terms be such.
"To me some less mechanic task assign;
"Consent, o Goddess, and the prize is mine."

Here the proud Queen's sagacious train exclaim;
"Instantly snatch the palms of proffer'd fame;
"So shall thy judges with complacent smile
"Approve thy neat, thy terse, thy classic style.
"As Fashion dictates, and our laws ordain,
"In lulling accents tune thy *honied* strain;
"With anchor'd pinnace safe in haven keep,
"Nor rashly venture on the stormy deep.

"The Naiads first address, and sauntering dream
"By the green margin of some crystal stream;
"To sweet Arcadia's blissful shades aspire
"In gentle Sydney's *shepherdish* attire.

"Thy second theme, some Amaryllis, chuse,
"Whose charms may animate thy sluggish Muse,
"Let Hammond's numbers touch the feeling heart:
"Be thou superior; add the garb of Art.

" In lofty diction bid her amply shine,
" Beauteous, angelic, — stop not there, — divine:
" Say in her cheeks what ambush'd javelins lie;
" What radiance beaming from her *sun-clad* eye."

This is but trifling.—" Wouldst thou then succeed?
" Fear not, be bold; select a theme indeed.
" Say, can thy soft insinuating skill
" Describe a Statesman's probity at will;
" With fervent zeal assiduous to commend
" Th' illustrious patron, and the generous friend,
" To wealth, to title, duteous homage pay,
" And make the great the subject of thy lay?

" Applause from echoing multitudes to gain,
" Why hesitate ——?"
Extorted by disdain,
Abruptly follows this concise reply;
" Let others handle themes like these — not I."

Then what asylum yet remains for me,
Where Candor dictates, and the Bard is free?
Say, shall I steer to reach yon fated land,
Where frequent wrecks deform the hostile strand,
Where dunce promiscuous rival dunce engages,
And mud with mud eternal battle wages?

Or shall I fly, where noisy tumults cease,
And seek the dwellings of inglorious Peace,

Lock'd

Lock'd in the bonds of happy Slumber fast,
To doze away remembrance of the past;
Forgetful too that e'er my childish tongue
With ravish'd wonder lisp'd th' imperfect song;
Content domestic quiet to pursue,
And bid that false coquette, the Muse, adieu?

Since Caution slumber'd when this rhyming will
First bade me stain with ink my hasty quill;
Let her depart, and visit those who fear
The Critic's lash, the Wit's contemptuous sneer.
I cannot now, superlatively wise,
Perform what * Epictetus would advise,
" Letting each dangerous enterprize alone,
" Call unsubdued security thy own."
Unfurl'd the banner, and the weapon cast,
All hopes of safety in retreat are past.

To purchase fleeting praise, I cannot sit
Charm'd by each species of new-fangled wit;
In a forc'd laugh, distort my pliant face,
At Shandy's filth, and Slawkerberg's grimace;
Or dwell with transport on the hobbling rhimes,
The classic cant of these poetic times.

Far be the odious Antiquary's frown,
Who aims to pull all living merit down,

* Αντικλ. εἰναι δυνασαι, εἰν εἰς μηδενα αλλον καλαδεωμαι, ου δε εστιν επι σοι σπουδη. Enchiridion, Cap. 25.

And

And mourns, to give his venom ample scope,
All genius buried in the grave of Pope.

But shall each mushroom-being of a day
Usurp an insolent oppressive sway;
Inhuman plunderers, by rapine fed,
Rake up the ashes of the mighty dead,
And conjure forth some veteran poet, drest
By hands profane in Fashion's tawdry vest?

Tir'd of the crowds, and noise of Lombard-street,
Thus when the Cit obtains a country seat;
Where in uncircumscrib'd extent was drawn
Magnificently large the various lawn,
He bounds to measur'd space the formal square,
Or with dwarf box surrounds the trim parterre:
From a green stagnant lake, in pipes convey'd,
Here sputters down the regular cascade,
There, draggled on in Beauty's vaunted line,
Behold the muddy trench — a serpentine.

Tell me no more how Shakespear's tints express
Th' inimitable feelings of distress,
When Romeo hastes to sleeping Juliet's tomb,
Or injur'd Lear * bewails his wretched doom.

* "King Lear is an admirable tragedy, as Shakespear wrote it; but as "it is reformed, according to the chimerical notion of poetical justice, in "my humble opinion, it has lost half its beauty."

ADDISON, Spectator, No. 40.

Where

Where are those tragic scenes renown'd of old,
In native strength irregularly bold;
Those lights, those shades, with which that master drew
Expressive nature to our dazzled view?
All, all are vanish'd. He whose ample mind
No rigid learning's slavish rules confin'd,
O'er trackless regions wont at large to soar:
Now cramp'd in trammels of *theatric lore*,
His seat usurp'd by more than Gothic lust,
Shorn of his plumes lies groveling in the dust.

Privy to Juliet's counterfeited death,
We wait the hour that shall restore her breath;
With Hope, with Fear, with fond Impatience, burn,
'Till absent Romeo speed his wish'd return:
Here must we stop;—and while in due array
The *stale procession* sweeps the tedious way,
Conspiring shouts of thronging galleries join;
"Indeed this Shakespear is prodigious fine!"

See frantic Lear in hopeless grief distrest,
And warm Compassion melt each generous breast;
Now hastes th' unravel'd drama to its close,
And Death breaks off the tenor of his woes.
Can we behold, without indignant rage,
The Monarch re-enthron'd upon the stage;
All Shakspeare's plan revers'd? So foul a deed
Not perjur'd Gonerill's cruelties exceed.

While

While scribblers, who usurp the poet's name,
Warn'd, but regardless of impending shame,
To furbish out some tragi-comic scene,
Engraft loose Shadwell on correct Racine,
Give each rude English hind a foreign air,
Or into rank bombast transform Voltaire;
Unpinion'd still the Muse adventurous sings,
Nor stoops to these imaginary Kings;
She opens honest Truth's obstructed source,
Points Satire's edge, and wings her javelin's force.

Such the designs my pencil rudely plan'd,
Their execution asks an abler hand.
Enough for me, if in these nameless shades,
Yet visited by chaste Aonia's maids,
Ingenuous Truth her artless charms display,
And steady Reason guide the temper'd lay:
Or, under strong Imagination's light,
Ages far distant crowd the mental sight,
When Rousseau tells the happy state of Man,
By Priestcraft forg'd ere Right Divine began;
Ere Tyrant claim'd the sovereign throne of God,
And crush'd the nations with an iron rod.

Thus unobserv'd by mad Ambition's gaze,
'Tis mine to rove thro' Fortune's humbler maze,
Assert the freedom of the dauntless Muse,
And read, or write, such whimsies as I chuse.

Cleaver,

Cleaver, may you, with more successful aim
Approach the temple of wide-echoing Fame,
And gather from Pieria's ample fields
The laurels unexhausted Genius yields;
Whose impulse, when it fires the generous mind,
Leaves slowly plodding Industry behind.

[1761.]

EPISTLE

EPISTLE II.

TO

MISS SARAH FOWLER.

WITH ROUSSEAU'S NEW ELOISE.

.....

They live, they speak, they breathe what Love inspires,
Warm from the soul, and faithful to its fires. POPE.

.....

CEASE, loveliest Nymph, to ask which wings the dart
Of surest aim to pierce the bleeding heart;
If Pallas' wit or Cytherea's charms
Bestow a keener edge on Cupid's arms:
O born with Beauty's cestus to controll
The stubborn heart; with elegance of soul
Worthy a Clarens' fam'd Platonic grove,
Accept this legend of disastrous love.

If, in these scenes of philosophic thought,
By Passion color'd, and by Genius wrought,
Where filial duty, penitential shame,
Can re-instate a more than virgin fame;

Where

Where Honor scorns the mean constraint of art,
And Friendship acts an unsuspecting part;
Haply the Fair, in whose pure breast we find
Each emanation of the noblest mind,
While youth's gay season prompts, in mid career,
Just linger ere she reach high Virtue's sphere;
Her faults (nor frown, ye Puritanic race)
Slight as the spots on Cynthia's clouded face,
The wise, the good, the generous, will forgive,
Pity her woes, and bid her memory live.

Like his own Alps, where all around is great,
And rifted fragments threat in horrid state;
To scatter plenty o'er the meads below,
From whose huge top the Rhone's swift eddies flow;
Meanwhile the Shepherd, whom his fate ordains
To tend the flock on those sequester'd plains,
Charm'd with the prospect of the various scene,
Reclines enraptur'd on the flowery green;
And when kind Morpheus seals his wearied eyes,
Fresh to his soul the dear ideas rise;
Larger than life each object is exprest,
And still the last seems lovelier than the rest.
So Rousseau's beauties strike; now part by part,
And now collected, rush upon the heart;
Wrapt in his Julia's fortunes, while the Sage,
Who scorns the little notions of his age;

Who to the *whole of Virtue* makes his claim,
And loves the essence better than the name,
As through this wild instructive walk he strays,
Now flush'd with hope, now starting with amaze;
By each humane, heroic passion tost,
In a vast labyrinth of enchantments lost,
Sees a fresh rose spring from each ragged thorn,
And every blemish serve but to adorn.

Health to the shade of that illustrious Dame,
(If such on earth existed;) may her fame
Obtain the palm it merits! — in a land
Where Mercy sits enthron'd, with pious hand
This unavailing wreath to shade her tomb
I consecrate, — while from its inmost gloom
Nature's resistless impulse cries aloud,
" O spare *that veil*, and reverence her shroud."

Phœbus (ah me!) to this aspiring strain
Lends a deaf ear, and all my hopes are vain.
See Justice poize in balance too severe
The Fair-one's doom, tho' a reluctant tear
Steal down her cheek, and Sanctity with scorn
Relate what clouds disfigur'd Beauty's morn.

Pale with chagrin and faltering as I stand,
While the soil'd wreath deserts my feeble hand;

Strict

Strict Truth, whose mandates ever pleas'd t' obey,
Low at her feet I cast this votive lay:
To sound your arduous praise yet bids me speak,
Tho' harsh my lyre and every chord too weak:
(Nor would I shrink appall'd, tho' Envy lay
Arm'd with a thousand snakes to bar my way.)
While in Perfection's fruitless search employ'd,
In all around the Sage beheld a void;
His Julia borrow'd with an Angel's air
Slight peccadillos from the Gallic fair:
O that his wand'ring feet had earlier stray'd
To seek retirement in the British shade;
And in those regions where *the Graces* dwell,
Near Severne's banks had haply fix'd his cell:
With loftier images his Genius fraught,
While matchless Virtue, matchless charms, he sought,
Had plac'd them blended in their happiest view,
And heighten'd every tint by copying you.

EPISTLE III.

ST. PREUX TO JULIA,

ON HER MARRIAGE.

FROM ROUSSEAU'S NEW ELOISE.

.....

——— æstuat ingens
Imo in corde pudor, mistoque insania luctu,
Et furiis agitatus amor, & conscia virtus. VIRGIL.

.....

STILL art thou mine; no magic can unbind
Two hearts, which Nature, and which Heaven has join'd;
The Priest indeed did ne'er confirm our choice,
Nor could it need the sanction of his voice:
Tho' Fortune, leagu'd our vows to disunite,
With-held the vulgar form, the bridal rite,
Yet shall the lover, dearer, better name,
Continue an inviolable claim,
That pleasing thought shall dissipate the gloom
Of my last hours, and chear the darksome tomb.

O could

O could these plaints my inmost soul express,
And picture each sensation of distress;
Ev'n Envy's slanderous tongue might hardly blame
The constant ardor of so pure a flame;
Thy heavenly charms first struck my raptur'd view,
No nymph till then my least attention drew:
With stedfast heat the same fond passion glows,
Unquench'd by time, unconquer'd by my woes:
And if, beyond th' oblivious grave's domain,
Of human feelings any trace remain,
Oft shall my soul, unwilling to be free,
Abstract itself from Heaven, and think on thee.

Midst each celestial transport of the heart,
Love will be heard, and Nature claims her part;
One while I mount o'er earth's contracted span,
Again subsiding feel myself a man,
Ye moments, purchas'd with an age of pain,
Whose dear idea must for ever reign:
Hence! nor let raptures past my memory fill,
Be blotted out, and I am virtuous still:
But ah, since one short guilty night, array'd
In tenfold darkness, with its baleful shade
For ever clouds the sunshine of my soul,
And woes on woes in long succession roll;
Quick let us add at least one happy hour
To those already snatch'd from Fortune's power;

And having been once more supremely blest,
Leave, since we must, to wretchedness the rest.

Shall we alone with weary steps pursue
That airy phantom veil'd from human view,
Which dreaming moralists Perfection call,
Taught by the Sage, but unattain'd by all?
See the gay Nymph whose headstrong passions rove,
Experienc'd in the various arts of Love,
To some Gallant, to-day, profusely kind,
Banish the distant Husband from her mind,
At whose return, to-morrow, she beguiles
His easy faith with well-dissembled smiles;
Meanwhile, of real happiness possest,
By no corroding jealousies opprest,
He slights the breath of Slander's clamorous tongue,
And lives unconscious of th' ideal wrong,
Nor can society a crime deplore,
Which but cements it with a friendship more.

What if the wretch, who, lost in wintry snows,
Houseless and cold, to some strange region goes,
While the tir'd Priests no more their vigils keep,
And universal Nature 's plung'd in sleep,
At Vesta's altar with the sacred fire
Light his quench'd torch, and unobserv'd retire,
Think'st thou the Goddess will avenge the deed,
Dart the red bolt, and bid the miscreant bleed?

By

By other laws superior beings move,
Cruel is man; but Mercy rules above.

Yet Heaven forbid that Julia's bosom, steel'd
Against the shafts of Destiny, should yield
To specious Sophistry's licentious wiles,
And, spurning Fear, be caught by Pleasure's smiles;
Tho' still this wounded heart thy charms adore,
Yet shall it love thy reputation more.

Far from the paths of Fortune or of Fame,
Content to vegetate without a name,
Where Albion's cliffs, inhospitably steep,
Extend their summits o'er the billowy deep,
Forlorn I go; yet, murmuring sigh for sigh,
Those rugged cliffs will to my plaints reply;
From thence, in secret, each revolving year,
My course, adventurous wanderer, will I steer,
Scenes of lost joy, our native mountains seek,
And, if Discretion's law forbid to speak,
By the mere sight of thee my woes beguile,
Steal a short look, and catch one parting smile:
Is that denied? — Beneath yon jasmine bowers,
Each fond memorial of our happier hours
Alone retracing, will I kiss the sod,
And count the flowers that spring where Julia trod.

Thus ministring at intervals relief
Hope's radiance glimmers thro' the clouds of grief:
Tho' such a complicated storm assails,
In this harsh strife Philosophy prevails;
Futurity's bleak prospect yields at last
To the delightful memory of the past.

[1768.]

EPISTLE

EPISTLE IV.

ST. PREUX TO LORD EDWARD BOMSTON.

FROM THE SAME.

.....

Is there no bright reversion in the sky,
For those who greatly think or bravely die? POPE.

.....

At length, my Lord, the stubborn conflict 's o'er,
Hope and her Syren smiles can charm no more;
The weight of sorrow loads my wasting years:
Depriv'd of every comfort that endears
This anxious life's vicissitudes; why drain,
With faltering hand, the bitter dregs of pain?
My harrass'd soul breaks free from vulgar laws,
And pleads with thee, my Friend, her arduous cause.

But while I yet retain this fleeting breath,
And pause a moment on the verge of death,
Since thou hast rescued, and with zeal to save
Still dost preserve this atom from the grave,

Tho' wretched, scorning an ungrateful part,
To thee I here disclose my inmost heart;
Each reason urge, my reason shall attend,
Heaven's will be done, still am I Virtue's friend;
But hence with Schoolmen, hence the Sophist guise,
In letter'd pomp unprofitably wise;
I know them not, the vain debate forbear,
Nor fondly think to trifle with despair.

"Behold yon guard desert his station'd tower,
"See here the slave escape his master's power,
"Such, such are they who execrate their birth,
"And rush unbidden from the walks of earth;"—
No, rather he, who, on his Lord's behest,
Springs from the trappings of a cumbrous vest,
With emulation fires the daring soul,
Which, stretching onward from life's utmost goal,
Escaping courts by mean chicanery barr'd,
At Heaven's tribunal seeks a just award.

"Is Life an evil then?"—With liberal view
Weigh well th' opinions of the learned few;
In vain let others throng Ambition's stage,
Fame's greenest laurels rise to crown the Sage;
Them he pronounces happiest, who aspire
Beyond contracted earth, and gross desire,
Aliens from each insinuating charm,
Who bid Philosophy the bosom arm;

Say,

Say, do not these anticipate their doom,
And o'er youth's sunshine cast a tenfold gloom?

To Pleasure's votary different objects rise,
He views the glittering scene with ardent eyes,
Eager to rush where wanton Love invites,
Or Circè's bowl extends the genial rites:
Ere long, deluded boy, these banquets pall,
The laugh expires which shook yon vaulted hall,
Till thy enervate senses scarce sustain
The faded roses which enwreath thy chain.

Authorities more firm than Augur's sign,
Or vague response from Cuma's frantic shrine,
Attest how oft distinguish'd merit bleeds,
And death the recompence of virtuous deeds.

But Life 's the boon of Heaven: nor shall my page
Excite the tribes of men, thro' desperate rage,
With one consent to strike the mortal blow,
And raise a vast Aceldama below:
Yet sure there are, whom, hopeless in distress,
Even Reason prompts to seek this last redress.
The love of life our morn of childhood fires,
Nor in the latest eve of age expires:
But when the voice of Nature speaks aloud,
When Pain, and Sorrow leagu'd, display the shroud,

He

He meanly hesitates who sickening lives,
Blind to the passport his Creator gives.
On promis'd better days Hope long relies,
This frail existence boasts so many ties,
So strong in bravest minds subsists a dread,
The squallid realms of Erebus to tread;
That when the world pours deluges of ill,
Our right to leave it long precedes the will.

"Cowards alone to adverse fortune yield,
"No Hero ever quits the desperate field,"
Exclaims our Casuist. O immortal Rome,
Empress of nations, weeping o'er the tomb
Of Brutus or of Cato, at whose name
Thy sons, inspir'd by Freedom's genuine flame,
Paid duteous homage, from their helm unbound
The verdant wreath, and kiss'd the holy ground,
Where is thy spirit? shall yon Pedant dare
In turgid phrase with dastards to compare
The men whose lives maintain'd a Country's cause,
Whose deaths extorted Pæans of applause,
For that their conduct sham'd the wretch who kneels
To Vice triumphant, dragg'd at Cæsar's wheels?

When Rome's polluted altars stream'd with gore,
The Sire, the Magistrate, were then no more,
All ties of duty ceas'd.—Each happier realm
Demands the Pilot watchful at the helm,

Demands

Demands th' impartial Judge, the Parent's care,
The Debtor's industry; the public share
A right in their existence, and a state
Of conscious merit props affliction's weight:
But I, who bear no adventitious worth,
Who stand one insulated thing on earth,
Am free to quit these mansions, where my pain,
Unheeded, wearies heaven and earth in vain.

My Lord, attend; these maxims calmly scan;
They ascertain the clearest right of man:
Who gave us reason, generously just,
Form'd not that talent for perpetual rust:
The merit which from patient sufferings flows
Can only grace inevitable woes.
The mandate Nature on my soul impress'd
Was this; to others just, thyself be blest.
Fear, not Religion, sees my woes increase,
Whilst Heaven's own edict offers a release.

In thunders utter'd, hear, "Thou shalt not kill."
Our verbal Commentators reason ill;
Else why that sanguine robe does Justice wear,
Why raise her vengeful falchion high in air;
Or why Bellona spread her crimson wings,
Idol of Christian Priests, of Christian Kings?
See at the close of Sampson's glorious deeds,
While crush'd in Dagon's fall the warrior bleeds,

His vanish'd strength by miracle return :
What throngs of slaughter'd foes attend his urn !
Cease then, blaspheming tongue ! was Heaven combin'd
To lead astray the credence of mankind ?

When Jonathan, and Saul his dauntless sire
With praise recorded by an hostile lyre,
Names undivided in pathetic song,
Swifter than eagles and as lions strong,
By Valor urg'd, their Country's woes to swell,
On Gilboa's summit with the mighty fell :
Say was it meet, thus circled by despair,
Reft of his scepter and his virtuous Heir,
The hoary Monarch should on earth remain,
To droop beneath Philistia's galling chain ?

The palm of manly fortitude is thine ;
Else hadst thou fail'd in sorrows great as mine :
Fortune may change, but Honor's stubborn claim
Thro' Time's long series yet remains the same :
Take but one step beyond ; — thy glories fade,
And Virtue, now thy guide, withdraws her aid.
Thanks for thy patient counsels ; — o my Friend,
We reach that crisis which bids patience end.

At Death's dark vestibule why shrink thy feet ?
We go a pilgrimage where all must meet :

Old

Old age will soon strip life of every charm,
And time the firmness of the soul disarm;
Then, faltering, slowly we approach the tomb,
And stand aghast at its impending gloom,
Till Atropos, in horrors clad, the yoke
Of sickness rend, and give the lingering stroke.

Aspiring to a more conspicuous state,
Still in pursuit of what the world terms great,
While others gain or forfeit wealth and power,
I only ask'd for one short blissful hour;
Had the malignant stars my fervent prayer
Rejected, I had perish'd in despair;
That boon once granted, satisfied I fall,
Transports enjoy'd no Demon can recall.

Realms unexplor'd display their myrtle bowers,
Their crystal streams, and amaranthine flowers;
From such a haven, shall we launch again,
To tempt the dangers of life's stormy main?
Our souls demand a more enlarg'd abode;
See Fortune urge, and Virtue point the road:
Let Friendship's wreath in everlasting bloom
Wave o'er the herse, and flourish round our tomb;
United thus, and marching hand in hand,
To gain the confines of a better land,
We sever each attachment which could bind
The heart to earth, nor leave a wish behind.

THE

ABUSE OF POETRY.

EPISTLE V.

TO

WADHAM WYNDHAM, Esq.

Grande locuturi nebulas Helicone legunto:
Si quibus aut Prognes, aut si quibus olla Thyestis
Fervebit, sæpe insulso cœnanda Glyconi. PERSIUS.

RUDE was the sylvan pipe; with artful song
No polish'd Bard engag'd the listening throng,
When first mankind, by simple Nature taught,
Their chearful offering to the Muses brought;
Unskill'd their notes, and obvious were their themes,
The Moon's pale orb, the Sun, the purling streams,
The Zephyrs whispering thro' the piny grove,
The sweets of Friendship, or the pangs of Love.

When cities rose, the Nine forsook the plain,
Mix'd in the press, and tun'd their social strain;

To suit the times, a pliant system wove,
Call'd Priests, Embassadors, Kings, Sons of Jove;
On Justice her avenging sword bestow'd,
And deck'd with olives Concord's calm abode;
Fit imagery to each sensation gave;
Form'd Venus for the amorous; for the brave
Mars, God of battle; others, flush'd with wine,
Hail'd Bacchus founder of the generous vine:
Thus to each votary's ardent wish inclin'd,
They spread a sweet delirium o'er the mind;
The youth who wooed them to his eager arms,
The youth who once beheld their dazzling charms,
Resistless as the cup which Circe brought,
No spell could rescue from the charms he sought.

Hush'd were the winds, the treacherous ocean smil'd,
When some too specious augury beguil'd
An inexperienc'd boy to quit the shore,
Launch a frail bark, and ply the desperate oar,
Bound for those realms where Poesy sublime
Sits thron'd in triumph o'er the wrecks of Time;
On these bewitching scenes, elate with pride,
I fix'd mine eyes, regarding nought beside;
Nor from such dear deluding vision woke,
From the black North till furious tempests broke;
Weary and wet, again I reach the shore,
And swear to trust the faithless deep no more.

Soon shall my feet approach yon solemn fane
Where Peace and Prudence hold their social reign;
Sweet Peace, who slumbering nods o'er Lethe's tide,
Neglected Prudence, vainly wont to chide
The flights of Fancy, and each bolder Truth
Which fill'd the strains of my misguided youth.
In fetters bound, and with dejected mien,
The Passions at its entrance shall be seen;
There Love shall move with languid steps and slow,
His darts all pointless and unbent his bow,
Envy askance shall view th' unruffled scene,
And pall'd Ambition rise no more a Queen;
Prevailing Apathy one calm shall know,
Ne'er flush'd by Hope, ne'er discompos'd by Woe;
Such are the joys prudential Peace attend;
Unnumber'd pangs the feeling bosom rend.

But ere Thou view my luckless harp unstrung
In mournful guise on yon pale osier hung;
Indulgent read this penitential lay,
'Tis truth I seek, let others claim the bay.

Ye sentimental few, whose souls disdain
Th' inconstant slave that breaks his Muse's chain,
And wandering far from her ideal grove,
Dares to renounce an unrequited love,
Hear this, and triumph; tho' the lighter scale
Of Fancy mounts, and worldly cares prevail,

Illusions faint as air, which leave behind
No fix'd impression on a common mind,
In mine, alas! I speak it now with pain,
Caught where they touch'd, and festering still remain.

From distant ages, when, on Gods unjust,
Patrons of rapine, cruelty and lust,
The Poet's vows were lavish'd, to the days
When tawdry Gesner, crown'd with German bays,
In Scripture loom a quaint embroidery wove,
Confounding Arnon's palms, and Herenhaussen's grove,
Ill could the Muse's vent'rous champions wield
Heaven's panoply, th' Archangel's lance, the shield
Borne by intrepid Martyrs, at the close
Of life, exulting o'er their Pagan foes:
Hopeless the task! along yon pictur'd meads,
In the brisk dance Imagination leads,
Seductive Error riots, while unseen
Languish the charms of Truth's severer mien.

Faith, Justice, Temperance, in some ruder time
Long ere a Shakespear grac'd Britannia's clime,
Arm'd by Provençal Bards with tragic rage,
Drove deadly Sins in person off the stage;
Again the scenes were chang'd; the Victors fled,
And every Horror triumph'd in their stead;
Priests sheath'd in mail, and tribes ferocious, view'd,
How Samuel's axe, the captive Agag hew'd,

Jephthah's

Jephthah's devoted Daughter, by a choir
Of nymphs attended, ran to meet her Sire
With hymns of gratulation; sainted Maid
Judith her Paramour's grim front display'd,
Hammer and nail the treacherous Jael bore,
The battlements of Geshur stream'd with gore,
At David's mandate, Achish, oft betray'd,
Still unsuspecting, lent the pirate aid:
To picture worth in attitude forlorn,
And hang discretion forth to public scorn,
By slighted Love's resentment next opprest,
"Joseph the Chaste" his piteous tale address'd,
To sooth the virtuous ears of Gallic Dames,
And sermonis'd against adulterous flames;
While, much chagrin'd a Hero to behold
So void of tenderness, so sternly cold,
They listen'd to his sorrows with disdain,
And deem'd the Prisoner worthy of his chain.

In Comic themes, the public taste to hit,
From Farquhar's ribaldry and Congreve's wit,
Down to the living play-wrights of our days,
(Green are the Bards, yet wither'd all their bays)
Have we not seen Religion serve at best
To round the period, edge the pointless jest,
Or for some trencher-Prophet claim a place,
Who sins, and ludicrously prates of Grace?

At length, declining these celestial themes,
Leaving Faith's glare for Virtue's steadier beams,
Should some dramatic advocate enquire
What candidates to moral worth aspire,
Amid the Chiefs each rival Poet draws,
Some thron'd, some vanquish'd in a glorious cause;
Or hope each excellence more clearly shewn
In times and stations nearer to our own,
And that the milder scenes of private life
Portray the constant Friend, the tender Wife,
New-model all that Nature schem'd amiss,
And form a system of domestic bliss;
First let him look on Patriot Honor scorn'd,
On Freedom gasping, Tyranny adorn'd
With every wreath luxuriant Fancy gives,
While Julius bleeds, or vile Octavius lives.

If Ammon's frantic Son with prosperous hand
Erect his trophies on Arbella's strand;
O'er prostrate hosts let wanton Atè guide
Her foaming chariot, and a crimson tide
Deluge the champain; yet the fair, the gay,
Statesmen more callous and more vain than they,
Mixt with plebeian auditors, shall raise,
To drown the shrieks of murder, hymns of praise,
O'er blazing cities joy with loud acclaim,
And lift to Heaven the ruthless spoiler's name.

Again behold Simplicity deprest,
And Innocence each driveling ideot's jest;
E'en Felony assumes the garb of fun;
Dup'd by his Mistress, plunder'd by his Son,
The scorn'd Old Man in impotent despair
Shrieks for redress, and rends his hoary hair;
Meanwhile the Critic, smiling at his rage,
Applauds the deed, and hoots him off the stage.
Such portraits Moliere drew: — our Bards, who roam
Thro' various realms to bring new follies home,
With mimic pen transcrib'd the guilty page,
And Fielding's Miser charms a *dutcous* age.

But lest the model of triumphant crimes
Might rise imperfect to succeeding times,
Lest they who rush from murder's dark abode,
In quest of rapine on the public road,
Be deem'd to perish through ignoble views,
Without the voice of one propitious Muse,
Macheath arises; echoing with applause,
Tumultuous galleries prop their champion's cause:
By these alluring scenes to guilt betray'd,
They soar beyond the little gains of trade. —
What recent horrors swarm, since Collier drew
The Sisiphæan catalogue to view! —
Thalia comes, despoil'd of half her bays,
Like Shakespear branded with a * Garrick's praise.

* Mr. Garrick held a Jubilee at Stratford-upon-Avon in honor of Shakespear, or, more properly speaking, to revile his memory, in verses like the following:

"As venison is very inviting,
"To steal it our Bard took delight in."

Were

Were I t' expatiate on each various mode,
Heroic, Pastoral, Elegy, and Ode,
Injurious Censure, undeserv'd Applause,
Frequent and fatal to the Muse's cause,
Since first before the sun she op'd her page,
And most of all in this degenerate age,
I should but swell the grievance, and too long
Trespass with an unprofitable song.

In Life's meridian other objects sway,
Than what once glitter'd in its orient ray.
Fresh to my soul occur those artless years,
When, free from guilt, incapable of fears,
Thinking each boon of earthly grandeur small,
And the coy Muse's favors all in all,
With thee, my Friend, I trod the flinty side
Of those bleak meads where * Itchin rolls its tide,
And if some inauspicious flower, array'd
In vernal hues, untimely doom'd to fade,
Adorn'd a scene so desolately bare,
Doting we gaz'd, and deem'd a Tempe there;
The Judge's coif, the mitre and the pall,
Blazon'd aloof on that scholastic wall,
Drew not one eager look, our raptur'd eyes
Saw Mantua's beech and Sulmo's villa rise:—
Ah much-lov'd stream, if now thy Naiads hear
No minstrelsy to sooth a female ear,

* At Winchester school.

On me since oft capricious Fate's decrees
Bestow the wish without the power to please,
Be it remember'd, in my native shades,
O'er such mean votary of th' Aonian maids
Few myrtle sprays their amorous verdure flung,
But thorns prevail'd, and bitter wormwood sprung,
While from yon * hills where scenes of wrath abound,
And Danish inroads mark this hostile ground,
Satire, unmask'd, descending took her stand,
And dealt her javelin to my willing hand.

To spurn defenceless Genius in the grave,
All danger ceas'd, superlatively brave,
Toiling to usher on with hoarse acclaim
Some modish scribbler to the walks of fame,
That he, my Gracchus, to the world may rise,
And I, his Mutius, draw the public eyes,
Such office to my rivals I consign'd,
But heard their eulogies with stedfast mind:
Save me, ye Gods, from fellowships like those,
And be such laurels trebled to my foes!

With freedom uttering what I strongly feel,
For no prudential views restrain'd my zeal;
Fond of the task, at some more genial hours,
I scatter'd Panegyric's vivid flowers,

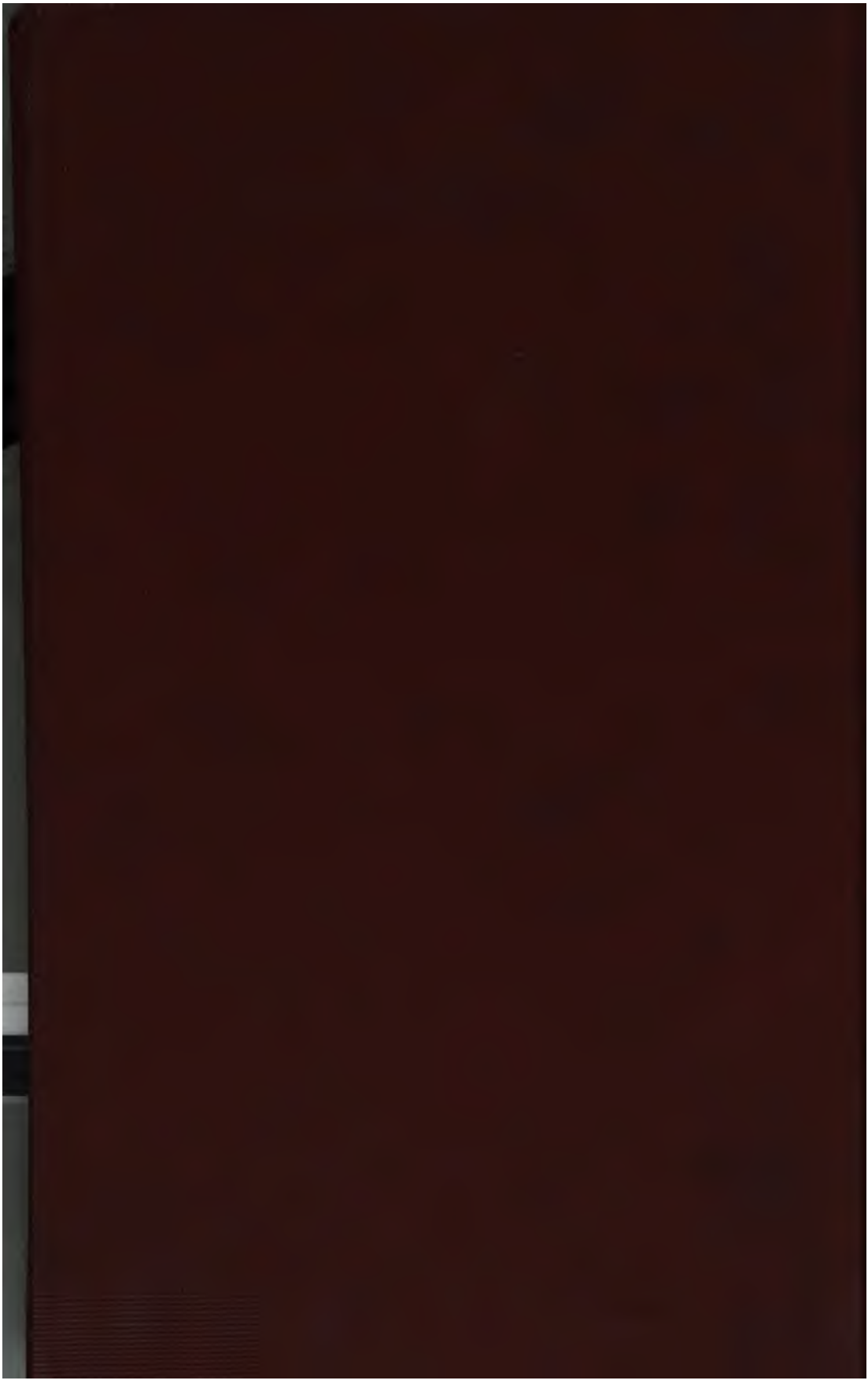
* "Arbury." Morton's Northamptonshire, p. 541.

Yet

Yet these rude altars (such at the command
Of honest Truth, my unpropitious hand
Exulting rear'd to them whose Beauty charm'd,
Whose sound Philosophy my firmness arm'd,
Whose Wit enliven'd, whose Opinions mov'd,
Whose Candor sooth'd me, or Rebukes improv'd),
No Muses hallow'd; this their only pride,
To such they blaz'd, and blaz'd to none beside.

Now quite estrang'd from Censure and from Praise,
While my faint harp attunes its closing lays,
To thee, whose merits in full light to shine
Need no encomium from a voice like mine,
The page I consecrate; such Friendship's claim,
All unadorn'd, it merely bears thy name.

[1769.]

THE END.

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